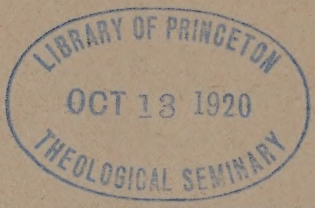

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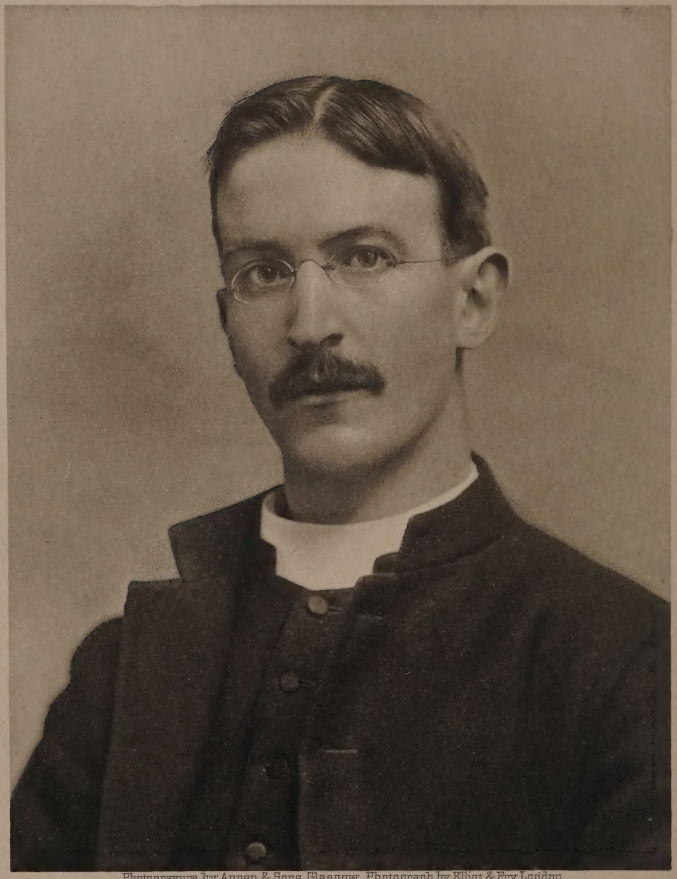

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GEORGE H. C. MACGREGOR

M.A. A Biography By the Rev

DUNCAN CAMPBELL MACGREGOR M.A

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TO HIS WIFE

Preface

AFTER my cousin's death, it was hoped that Professor Moule or, failing him, Mr. Meyer, might be able to undertake the preparation of a brief memoir. Both these eminent men were obliged, for various reasons, and especially on account of the pressure of other work, to decline the task. The work was then entrusted to me. I undertook it with diffidence, fearing lest the subject should suffer from unskilful handling. None the less I felt obliged to accept it as a solemn trust. Now that the work is finished, I can only hope that some may find the reading of it as profitable, and as full of admonition, as the writing has been to myself.

Though unable to undertake the book, Dr. Moule very kindly agreed to contribute a chapter on Keswick and George Macgregor's work there. Assistance of this kind was indispensable for me, as I

was never at the Convention during my cousin's lifetime. Dr. Moule's beautiful narrative and tribute forms Chapter VIII.

My materials have come from so many sources that a personal expression of thanks in every case is impossible. I ask all who have been good enough to furnish letters or other material, some of which, owing to exigencies of space, it has not been possible to make use of, to accept my gratitude. Two friends, however, in addition to Dr. Moule have helped so greatly to make the book what it is that it would be less than justice not to name them—Mr. James E. Mathieson and the Rev. G. A. Johnston Ross.

D. C. MACGREGOR

WIMBLEDON, 1*st October*, 1900.

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WHAT THE WORLD SAW

CHAPTER I

What the World Saw

WE who knew him need no description of George Macgregor. The tall, wiry figure, so instinct in every nerve with life, the earnest, appealing voice, the frank, cordial smile, all live in the memory of thousands; and there are very many who owe to him the greatest of all debts, because his words were the means of turning them to God, or of summoning them to a higher life. During the last few years of his brief ministry there were perhaps not many religious teachers in England who in certain circles exerted a greater influence. At Keswick especially, and in the many conventions all over the country organized after the Keswick model, he was one of those who not only are listened to with pleasure, but whose words invariably guide and help. But the impression of a life soon fades. Another generation, that did not know him, will soon ask, at the mention of his name, who and what was he? But the life we knew ought not to be forgotten. It has lessons for our own day and for some time to

come. Some record of his life-story, accordingly, is here to be attempted. And first, a brief general answer to the question, What the world saw.

Some lives tell upon the world through a long continuance, and some by a brief intensity. In Christian biography there are outstanding examples of both; Wesley is a type of the first, and McCheyne of the second. George Macgregor's life belongs to the latter class, and the parallel with McCheyne is one that naturally occurs to the mind. There was, indeed, a marked likeness between the two men, apart from the common fact of the shortness of their days. Physically, there was a certain resemblance in the spare, straight figure, and the look of purpose and decision. But the real likeness lay in deeper matters; in the concentration of the whole life upon one thing, and the passion for winning souls. It would not be easy, perhaps, to find two men, parted by an interval of half a century, who were spiritually more closely akin than these two. They preached the same Gospel, and they looked on life with the same eyes. No doubt McCheyne possessed certain gifts, poetic and artistic, to which George Macgregor had no claim; and his type of character, according with his physical constitution, was perhaps more predominantly gentle and tender. But each was a gift of God for the work of the Church in his own day;

and the firmer and, in some aspects, possibly the sterner character was doubtless needed for the busy and crowded life of the close of the century.

The first thing that struck you about him was, Here is a man intensely alive. He had great powers of enjoyment, and threw himself heart and soul into everything. To some who never heard him preach he preached by his vigour and animation during a holiday, and by the evidence he gave that a life of consecrated service was a happy and delightful life. His great physical strength and exuberant energy were a necessity for the work he had to do. Many notable examples of Christian devotion, such as Brainerd and Kirke White, have been very delicate, and the story of their patience and of the wonderful work done under crushing physical difficulties is always moving. But when the body is feeble the spirit is apt to be morbid; and, for young people especially, the invalid type of Christianity, overshadowed by the thought of death, and lacking the joy of existence, is anything but attractive. A man with the frame of an athlete, whose clear, bright eye and hearty tones and swift springy step tell of abounding vitality, is the kind of speaker, and the kind of example, they like. Here, then, was a man who could apparently go through any amount of work without being tired, who would throw himself into any game with the zest of a schoolboy, who

would cycle sixty or eighty miles any day, and go back to his work without turning a hair, who was the life of any circle he mingled with, whose look of buoyant health and vigour made people turn to look at him in the street. *Mens sana in corpore sano.* People like to look at a live human being like this, and they listen to his utterances with a special respect.

His mental gifts were like those of his body—strength, and speed, and all-round adaptability. He was not an original thinker, but he was a diligent and appreciative student of the best thought of others. His mind may not have been of the deepest or widest, but it was intensely clear, and its processes astonishingly rapid. What he saw and knew he grasped and did not fumble with, and what he knew himself he could always make luminously plain, beyond all possibility of doubt or misunderstanding, to others. His mind, moreover, was not only an active and vigorous, it was also a well-stored one. Looking at the vast amount of public work that he did, one wondered sometimes how he could find time for reading; and perhaps some who have no idea how much a determined man can put into the day's work, settled in their own minds that, now he was such a busy man, Macgregor never read at all. But those who knew better could tell a different tale, and the record in each year's diary, merely a bare list of

books read, and the dates when they were begun and finished, shows the energy and resolution with which he kept his work up to date. The same swiftness and momentum that belonged to him in everything was seen here; he drove his way through large and difficult books in a surprisingly short time. In the case of lighter reading, novels, for instance, of which he read a fair number, he would often finish a book at a single sitting. To be widely read, indeed, he made no claim. I daresay he did not care much for what is called general culture. What he knew was never obtruded; there was nothing in his ordinary conversation, nor perhaps in his sermons and addresses, to indicate, except in regard to Biblical scholarship, that he knew a great deal more than other people. Yet no one could be long in his company without being conscious of a certain power, and all who were themselves students admired the sinewy strength and the sound furnishing of his mind.

But the foremost impression with every one who knew or talked with George Macgregor from his student days, was that of a minister of Christ. That was what he lived for, and to it everything else was subordinated. With his usual clearness he saw that a choice must be made, and with his own resolute decision he made and kept to it. "A man has only one life," he said when he accepted the call to London, and this he chose for his life, to preach the

Gospel of Christ to men. No one could be long with him without seeing this. It was always first. Not that he was indifferent to other things. He was an earnest student, and loved his books. He was a decided politician, and interested in all the currents of the national life; every important item, for instance, in the war news of last winter and spring is noted in his private journal, and friends who talked with him during these days were struck with his broad and statesmanlike view of the whole situation. He would talk with zest of such matters, or of travel, or of the last new book; but before long the conversation would work round to the great object of his life, and there continue and end. This made some complain of him, at times, as a man with but one idea. More than that, it sometimes looked as if even he were not quite free from the tendency, often seen in evangelists, to talk a good deal about his own work. But those who saw deeper knew that it was not really so. No one could be more really humble. It was only that his life-work so absorbed him, that it could not long remain in the background. For outward recognition of it, in the way of any sort of tribute to himself, he cared absolutely nothing, and never mentioned these. It positively pained him to have any mere compliments repeated. His one aim was to win men and women to God, and to call those who were in Christ already to enter into a deeper

and closer fellowship with Him. Our time has seen few men more entirely consecrated to this.

The secret of it was, what so many have spoken of, his profound and overmastering sense of the Presence and the Call of God. "I have never seen it so strongly in any one," writes a friend. "His life was so lived in the presence of his Master, that no one ever came into close contact with him without feeling the power of that Presence, and so no one ever came away quite the same afterwards." That one word, *Rabboni, My Master!* on which he so often spoke, the text of his memorable sermon at the Christian Endeavour Convention at Belfast, was the key to his whole career. To that Heavenly Master he had absolutely surrendered himself. Hence his brightness and joyfulness; hence, too, his calm; hence, also, which is not a small thing, the sustained seriousness and elevation of tone in all his public addresses. "He always came," says one who has had peculiar experience of large general meetings, "as a messenger from God. He never joked, or wasted time in commonplaces, but went direct to his subject, and lifted up the audience with him." He lived as a man set in trust with the Gospel; and the Gospel was to him not only the strongest, but the most joyful and absorbing thing in the world.

He was deeply sympathetic, and could be very tender. Perhaps, however, he was not, on the whole,

of the gentler type of sainthood; the type of Fenelon, or Keble, or Miss Havergal, to name representatives from differing schools. His was a stronger and more masculine type, such as one sees in Samuel Rutherford or John Henry Newman. At times there was even noticeable in him a certain asperity, something that suggested that the strong wine of a strong character had not had time wholly to settle and clarify. But it was mellowing apace in these last years. Though his temper was naturally impatient, he had acquired a fine calmness amid the innumerable interruptions of his busy life, and his views on all subjects, men and things, were gaining in breadth and maturity. While he was becoming an ever more noted and influential speaker at Keswick and other conventions, he was also year by year a truer and more helpful friend. "Full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," he was, as thousands to whom his preaching was blessed can testify; it is almost higher praise—for there is always a risk that so much public ministry may somewhat starve the home and the inner life—that we can say of him with such emphasis, what is also said of Barnabas—"He was a good man."

Thus he did his work and finished his course in these closing years of our busy century, and then was suddenly called away. The lesson of a life, so swift, so intense, so devoted, ought not, one feels, to

be forgotten. For ministers of the Gospel, in particular, and for young men and women, this brief career speaks. It is always well for us when our examples of consecration have not to be sought in far-off centuries, amid conditions of life widely different from ours, but may be seen in our own midst, among those who are bearing the same burdens and wrestling with the same problems as ourselves. It assures us afresh that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And here among ourselves was one whose life-motive, amid all the complex conditions of modern life, was as clear and simple as that of St. Paul: *This one thing I do.*

FERINTOSH

CHAPTER II

Ferintosh

THE parish of Urquhart or Ferintosh lies in Eastern Ross-shire, in the north-west part of the beautiful peninsula called the Black Isle, which extends between the Cromarty and the Beauly Firths. The Free Church and manse are pleasantly situated on the gentle slope of the hill, looking over the water where the ferry crosses to Dingwall, and beyond to the huge mass of Ben Wyvis, with the jagged Scuir-na-Voulin and the Strathconon mountains closing in the view to the west. The prospect is northerly, and the trees planted to shelter the house from winter storms now almost hide it from view. But for half a century the spot has been pointed out to many a visitor as the later scene of the labours of Dr. John Macdonald, the "Apostle of the North," and to many it possesses now a not less tender interest as the birthplace of George Macgregor.

He was born on the 14th of June, 1864, the sixth child and fourth son of the Rev. Malcolm Macgregor. His father, who succeeded Dr. Macdonald

as Free Church minister of Ferintosh in 1850, was the oldest son of John Macgregor, a crofter and small builder at Fearnan on Loch Tay side, in Perthshire. Old John Macgregor was a somewhat remarkable man. For ordinary business he had too much of the dreaminess of the Celt, and was too sanguine and too unworldly to be very prosperous. But he had a passion for education, and beginning with the building at his own cost of a humble schoolhouse for his little hamlet, he lived to see all his five sons enjoy a university education and qualify themselves for learned professions. For this ambition of his he had often to stand a little raillery from his neighbours. The gibe of a neighbouring parish minister, a man of no great earnestness, is still remembered. "Is it true, John," he said to the honest builder one day, "that you're sending all these boys of yours to study for the ministry?" "Yes, sir; I hope to do it," was the answer. "Hoots!" said the minister; "you'd far better thatch the houses with them!"

The charming reminiscences of "Old Highland Days," by the late Dr. Kennedy, of Stepney, recently published in the *Leisure Hour*, seem to give the very atmosphere of simple home-life in Breadalbane seventy or eighty years since. But Dr. Kennedy probably left the district too young to do full justice to the spiritual depth and beauty of character often

found amid those humble surroundings. Old John Macgregor's wife, Christina Campbell, was a most saintly woman. Her gentleness and prayerfulness are still very vividly and tenderly remembered, though nearly forty years have passed since she entered into the King's presence. In her son Malcolm were found the chief characteristics of both his parents. At college he was a diligent student, and became a sound scholar. In the Divinity Hall, too, he was known for his devoutness, a true man of prayer. He did not fulfil as a preacher, in after life, the promise of his early days. But throughout his ministry of nearly forty years his work, as good judges testify, was always solid and edifying, and his memory will long be cherished in Ferintosh as that of a kindly and faithful pastor and a good man.

Mr. Macgregor's first wife was Johanna Robertson, youngest daughter of Alexander Robertson, of Thurso, sometime Lieutenant in the 79th regiment, the Cameron Highlanders. Lieutenant Robertson had some eventful experiences in the Peninsular War, to which he proceeded with his regiment about 1811. He was present at Salamanca, was wounded at Vittoria, but was able to take part in the battle of the Pyrenees, and in the passage of the Nivelle. The last of these finished his campaigning. He was so severely wounded that he had to be

sent home, and eventually to retire from the service. He had, however, been twice mentioned in dispatches, and his services and bravery were not forgotten. In London he had an audience of the Prince Regent, and also of the Duke of York, then Commander-in-Chief, out of which came, years afterwards, the offer of a commission for one of his sons, who attained in due time some rank in the Indian Army. Miss Johanna Robertson was something of a beauty, and greatly admired, and many of her friends were surprised at her marrying the grave minister of Ferintosh. Her brightness and natural gaiety brought a new life into his home. Her surviving children's recollections of her are all bright. To her son George, who was only four years old when, in 1868, she died at the age of thirty-three, she was only a dream-like, beautiful memory; but the elder ones have a vivid remembrance of her tender love, as well as of her lively spirits when, in spite of delicate health, she played and sang and romped with them. "I am a great believer in joy," said her son on one occasion. This, and the shining look on his face, he inherited from his mother.

She gave her fourth son the name of George Hogarth Carnaby, after his great-uncle, who had been an officer in the Middlesex Militia. These military relatives were among the heroes of his boyhood, and it is no wonder that there was so much of

the soldier spirit in him. A drum or a military band always stirred him; the drilling or marching of soldiers was one of the things that would at any time attract him for a little from his books; and though, with his thirst for knowledge of all sorts, he liked to hear experts in any line of life discussing their own subjects—engineers, barristers, or medical men—what he really enjoyed most, outside his own profession, was the conversation of officers. On both sides his blood was purely Celtic, and he shewed through life the Celtic combination of qualities,—poetry and mysticism, with a peculiar energy and dash. The *praefervidum ingenium*, so often spoken of, has seldom been more strikingly illustrated in our day than in the intense and devoted life of this son of a Ross-shire Manse.

The impressionable boy grew up amid surroundings well fitted both for the awakening and the fostering of the deepest impressions. Ferintosh is associated with much that is memorable and precious in the religious history of the Highlands. The ministry, first of the saintly Charles Calder (1774–1812), and then of the mighty Dr. John Macdonald (1813–1849), made the parish a great religious centre for three-quarters of a century. The labours of Charles Calder seem now a very far-off tradition, but from the brief notices of the *Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, and other testimonies of the generation that followed him,

it is possible to gather a tolerably clear conception of the man and his work. His preaching was not oratory like that of his successor. It was merely the crystal-clear presentation of truth, so exquisitely simple that the humblest could understand, and enforced by a life of shining saintliness. A later generation saw the same type repeated in his grandson, Dr. Charles Mackintosh, of Tain and Dunoon. McCheyne, Moody Stuart, George Macgregor himself—in all of them there was much that resembled this Highland master in Israel of a hundred years since, with his lucidity in exposition, and his holy life. Very solemn were Mr. Calder's appeals to the conscience, searching and strict his dealing with the inner life. The introspection which has always been characteristic of Highland piety was carried by him, indeed, to a morbid extreme. As we read of him, we are sometimes reminded rather of Luther's conflicts with the devil than of his *Liberty of a Christian Man.* Calder missed, no doubt, much of the brightness and joy of life in the Spirit. But at least he laid the foundations very deep. The necessity of the new birth, the reality of conviction of sin and of repentance the glory and efficacy of the saving work of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit—these were the great key-notes of his preaching ; and doubtless, as his epitaph says, many saints of God rejoiced in his light.

More widely famed was his great successor, Dr.

Macdonald. As a pulpit orator he must have ranked with the greatest, with Whitefield and Chalmers. But the name commonly given him, "the Apostle of the North," marks a higher honour still, the honour of the evangelist and soul-winner at a time when in wide tracts of country the gospel was almost unknown. From the very beginning of his Ferintosh ministry, Dr. Macdonald's preaching seemed to be attended with blessing wherever he came, and the people journeyed long distances to hear him whenever the opportunity offered. It was then, and still is, in many Highland parishes the custom to have the Communion only once a year. The season is summer; the congregations meet principally in the open air; and the special services preceding and accompanying the sacrament last for five or six days. The minister of the parish is assisted by honoured brethren from other places, each of whom may preach a number of times, the whole forming a sort of religious convention to which hundreds, sometimes thousands, throng from far and near, and where souls are born for eternity. For thirty years Dr. Macdonald spent a great part of every summer in taking part in such gatherings. At Ferintosh itself the scene of these annual meetings was the famous "Burn," a natural amphitheatre where a small stream issues from the wood, and grassy sloping banks recede on either side. The communion table is spread in the hollow, where

the stream was long ago covered in, and the congregation, to the number of several thousands, are seated on the slopes, and under the shade of birches and alders. These solemn services still continue, and though a decreasing population and changes in the people's habits have diminished the numbers who attend them, the place is still to many the gate of Heaven.

Such were the associations amid which the boy was reared. The reality and greatness of the spiritual life were early impressed upon him. The religion of the Highlands has been much criticised, especially by those imperfectly acquainted with it, and some of its defects are manifest enough. The awe and mystery, for instance, with which the Lord's Supper is surrounded have often this effect, that in a large parish there is only a handful of communicants, and these all persons past middle life. Anxiety rightly to "fence the table," and to enforce the duty of self-examination, degenerates into a kind of superstition. It almost seems, in some instances,—or did so, at least, in former years,—as if younger persons were not expected to enter into such covenant with God. They might look on, and hope and pray to attain to it some time, possibly before they grew old; but that was all. In such a type of religion the truths of love and joy are comparatively in the background; and Church life, lacking the enthusiasm and energy of youth, is

neither aggressive nor progressive. But while candour must recognise these defects, which are intensified when spiritual life grows low, it must acknowledge, on the other hand, that nowhere have the majesty and glory of God, the completeness of Christ's substitutionary work, and the dignity and grandeur of life in the Spirit, been more powerfully set forth than in the Highlands. In George Macgregor's case, there were home influences at hand to counteract defects in the prevailing type of religion. His father's devout, kindly heart, and wise common sense saw what was best for his children. The home life was a happy one, and the Sabbaths, despite church services which to a modern taste would seem both long and sombre, were never burdensome or unhappy days. The hymn the children sang expressed what they all felt—

> O the Sabbath morning, beautiful and bright!
> Joyfully we hail its golden light,
> All the gloomy shadows chasing far away,
> Bringing us the pleasant day!
> 'Tis the day that God has blessed!

Mr. Macgregor's teaching and influence, too, effectually dispelled, at least for his own household and parish, any idea that the religious life was scarcely a thing to be expected of the young. Among his own children there was much early grace, and those who thus found the Lord he did not hesitate to admit to confess Him at His Table. It was a touching and

beautiful sight, at the great summer gatherings in the Burn, when, amid the solemn silence, or the plaintive Gaelic singing of the 103rd Psalm, some of the minister's sons and daughters might be seen taking their places at the table, the only young people amid so many old and venerable. There were farmers, cottars, shepherds, with a sprinkling of substantial burghers and professional men from Dingwall or Cromarty, men of every degree, but all of mature age; and there were matrons, and widows with snow-white caps, the treasured Bible carefully wrapped in a pocket handkerchief, with a sprig of lavender or rose-mary to "keep the place"; and there, among all these, a new and unexpected element, the bright, grave faces of a younger generation. Surely it was a sight full of promise and of hope. But who could foresee the blessing that was to come in after years from that early decision, and that early confessing of Christ?

As a child, George was somewhat delicate, with a high-strung nervous temperament. After his mother's early death he was brought up by an aunt until his father's second marriage to Miss Jessie Munro, of Conon Cottage, in 1872. The little boy had from the first a thoughtful and enquiring mind. Some still remember his sonorous reading of an occasional verse at family worship, as he sat on his father's knee, when five years old; and his wise, sententious utter-

ances made the other children call him "the professor." His first school was the Free Church School of the parish, a field's length from the Manse, where he made good progress under the teaching of the late Mr. McDiarmid. At the age of nine he was sent with an elder brother to Inverness, and attended the Academy for five years. This was in all ways an important period in his life. The stimulus of school, with its work and companionships, was essential for a nature so susceptible and eager as his, and the larger life of a considerable town developed much that might have lain dormant in the quiet rural parish. The ministry of the Rev. Dr. Black, of the Free High Church, at once interested and helped him, and the minister was quick to recognise the eager and thoughtful young listener. "With what pleasure I look back," writes Dr. Black, "to the old days when the Ferintosh boys attended our services; and now the two are in glory."

The five years in Inverness were years of steady diligence and progress. At the age of fourteen he was one of the head boys of the school, and gained the medal for mathematics. He was so proficient in shorthand that he had already gained a full certificate from Sir Isaac Pitman's Institute at Bath, certifying him as qualified to teach the system. The knowledge of this art, possessed by comparatively few professional students, though almost essential for

young men in business, stood him in good stead throughout life. All his sermons and private memoranda are written in shorthand, and when he pleased he could take notes of anything that interested him with the skill and ease of a practised reporter. The certificates of his masters in Inverness lie before me as I write. All express but one opinion of him, and in almost the same language. "I was very highly satisfied," says the Rector of the Royal Academy, Mr. Eadie, "with his diligence, progress, and general conduct. He held an excellent place in all his classes, and in his last session gained the mathematical medal. His general conduct was all that could be desired, and he is a young man worthy of every encouragement." The fact was, the boy of fourteen had already a man's heart, and was ready to go forth bravely to face the world. His mind was fully made up on the subject of his future calling. A relative, who was struck with the promise he shewed, offered to defray his college expenses if he would follow the study of law. The boy had to give his own answer, which was perfectly decided: many thanks to the kind friend for his proposal, but he had determined to be a minister. But how about the cost of the education? was he justified in refusing an offer which would so greatly relieve his father? To this his answer was that he hoped to do as his father himself had done, and by means of bursaries and

teaching support himself through college. The golden gates of his childhood, as George Eliot says, were early closing behind him. But life and service were beckoning, and he was eager to hasten on with his training, and be ready to do something for God.

COLLEGE YEARS

CHAPTER III

College Years

"Undoubtedly to study and prepare myself is my chief duty just now."—*Letter to his Father.*

IN the end of October, 1878, George Macgregor entered the University of Edinburgh as an arts student. His age was fourteen and four months. In Scotland lads have always gone to college young, sometimes absurdly so. Dr. Chalmers, for instance, in the end of last century, was sent to St. Andrews before he was twelve. But for many years the age of entrants has been steadily rising, and for a generation or more a student of fourteen has been exceptional. Let no one imagine, however, that the schoolboy from Inverness Academy was unqualified for university work, or unable to profit by the studies of the place. In those days the course necessary for the Master of Arts degree was still a fixed and unvarying thing. Seven subjects of examination were required: Latin, Greek, Mathematics—the *Trivium* of school studies, with a *Quadrivium* of new work, Logic, Natural Philosophy, Ethics, and Rhetoric,

with English Literature. There were no alternative courses for men who might be devoid of any mathematical turn, or for those who, on the other hand, might have a special bent for science. A limited number went in for honours in one or more of the three groups into which the seven subjects were divided, but no one could receive the degree who had not passed in all seven. Since then, Lord Kinnear's Commission has made the degree course a great deal more flexible, and there are now a score of avenues open for studious young men and women desirous of writing themselves down M.A., in place of the one narrow entrance of older days. But it perhaps remains to be seen whether the new system will prove equal to the old as a mental discipline, and as a preliminary to the special studies of the learned professions.

For a mind like George Macgregor's, indeed, a better training could scarcely have been devised. He was too rapid and too practical to care for a profound or delicate scholarship. With all his splendid industry, he had not, perhaps, the particular kind of patience, nor the power of selecting and concentrating on one line of study, which are needful for the specialist. He was not a great classic, nor was he a metaphysician. His strongest bent, perhaps, was mathematical, and if that hereditary leaning towards the army had had its way, he might have made a

fine officer of engineers. But his heart was already set on a different course, and for his future ministry his college training was invaluable. The variety of studies, all pursued with diligence and vigour, though in no case, it may be, carried to a very advanced point, served both to store his mind, and to train and sharpen it as an instrument. The moral development, too, of these college years was not less remarkable than the intellectual. Like many Scottish lads, he supported himself from the first almost entirely by gaining bursaries and by teaching. Those quiet, plodding years saw the formation of habits of the most determined and unsparing industry, of a rigid accuracy and economy, both of means and time, and self-denial that became a second nature. Out of such a training grew the self-reliance, the fearlessness, and the strong manhood that marked him in after years.

He lived in simple lodgings with his brother Alec, three years his senior, who was studying medicine. The two bright young Highlanders had no lack of friends, but they had no leisure to accept many invitations. Their business was to work, and to make the most of those precious years and the opportunities which would not return. "I do most thoroughly believe in hard work," George wrote to his sister. It was a faith which he carried with him through life. Some friends thought that both lads

perhaps injured their health by the intense application of those Edinburgh years. But this is doubtful. There was no sign of weakness or feebleness about either. Both became tall and wiry men, of exceptional muscular strength and endurance. Alec, who was fair, while George was dark, was perhaps the handsomer of the two, but both were figures that "no one would have passed without remark."

Entering college so early, George Macgregor wisely made no attempt to hurry over his course. He took five sessions, and did not complete his degree until April, 1883. In every class list his name is mentioned with distinction, and in most he gained prizes. He stood sixth in Professor Calderwood's Moral Philosophy class, though one of the youngest students there, and his home letters show the keen interest and the enthusiasm with which he followed the Professor's teaching on such topics as the Conscience and the Will, and his exposition of Kant, Butler, and Edwards. In the next chapter we shall see something of the development of the young student's spiritual life. That this was bright and warm during most, if not all, of his university course, there is abundant proof. He had made clear choice of his life calling. He was to be a minister of the Gospel of Christ; and already possessed at times with the idea that his life was to be a short one, he sometimes longed for those years of prepara-

tion to be over, so that his life work might begin. In such circumstances, some earnest young men neglect their studies, and even justify their doing so on the ground that the heart ought to be given to the deepest things. Our student's mind was too wise and well-balanced to fall into any such error. He knew his duty, and did it with all his might, while remembering that study must be leavened with devotion, else the spiritual life will grow cold.

In a packet of his home letters, carefully preserved and docketed in his father's hand, there is plentiful evidence of the spirit of this earnest student. In February, 1882, he writes to ask his father's opinion on the meaning of the great Christological passage in Philippians ii. 6, 7. "If we accept the theological axiom regarding Christ's incarnation, 'Remaining all that He was, He became what He was not,' how is it," asks the young theologian, "that our Lord Jesus 'emptied Himself'?" His father's reply has not been found, but it appears to have been satisfactory, for a fortnight afterwards the son thanks him for it, and remarks that, looking into Owen on *The Person of Christ*, he finds what was, perhaps, not surprising, that Owen's interpretation of the word "robbery" and his father's agree. In another letter he mentions how the reading of Dr. Westcott's *The Bible in the Church*, has given him for the first time a definite idea of the formation of the New Testament Canon.

These theological excursions reveal the bent of his mind, and the region where his deepest interests lay, but they were never allowed to encroach on the time necessary for his work in science or philosophy.

To his Father.

February 21, 1883.—Perhaps I shall be put down as a moraliser on the flight of time, but I cannot but be struck when I think that in a month and a half the session will be over, in two months my university course finished, and I hope my degree obtained. When time is so valuable and so fleeting, well may I pray: Lord, teach me to number my days. I should like to say, and live up to what the hymn says :—

> Take my life, and let it be
> Consecrated, Lord, to Thee . . .
> Take myself, and I will be
> Ever, only, all for Thee.

That's how I would like to live.

February 23.—On Wednesday night I had a long walk with a great friend of mine. He is a very nice fellow, and such a warm, earnest Christian that it does me good to be with him. I feel very much the need of *Christian* friends and Christian fellowship with them, for this incessant study is so apt, in me at least, to produce coldness and almost indifference. It tends very much to lead away from our "first love," unless the Lord keep us. Undoubtedly to study and prepare myself is my chief duty just now, but I am longing to get the harness on, and get into active work for my dear Master. I know not when I shall be taken away, but if it is the Lord's will, I should like to do some

good work for Him here before going home. What a home, "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away"!

I had the pleasant duty of conducting one of the ward services in the Royal Infirmary last Sabbath morning. I spoke to the patients on the grand invitation, Isaiah lv. 1, and John vi. 37, saying something briefly about Him Who gave it, the freeness of the invitation, and the terrible danger of refusing it.

The next passage refers to his favourite professor:—

On Sabbath evening I heard Dr. Calderwood preach on, "Come over to Macedonia and help us," so that I know him now as professor, minister, and man. He is at present lecturing on "Moral Disorder in our Nature," and his lectures are very interesting. I watch them with great interest to see how they bear on the Biblical doctrine of human depravity. It is very instructive looking at such things from the two points of view, and finding philosophy confirming Scripture. This I believe all true philosophy will do. A thing I like about Professor Calderwood is that he loses no opportunity of pointing us all away past man and nature "up to nature's God." The hush that is on the class-room at such times is most impressive.

But it is in the pages of the shorthand journal that the deepest record of his inner life is found. Sometimes the record is so personal and sacred that it seems like profanation to open up this inmost fellowship of a soul with God. But for other students

especially, and for us all, it may be profitable to see how, in the case of such an intensely diligent student, praying and working went together, and how the busy outward life had its constant centre of peace in communion with his Father in Heaven.

JOURNAL

Wednesday, April 4, 1883.—A day of blessing and privilege to me. Felt near my God all the day. I wrought very hard in the morning, and went over a very great deal of work, getting a thorough hold of the Inductive Logic and a great deal of Calderwood's work. Then went away to the class at noon. We got the result of the last examination. I was very much surprised and delighted to find myself second, with 87 per cent. I did not expect anything like this; but I just gave my most hearty thanks to my God for answering prayer. Lord, enable me to give heartily whatever power or talent Thou hast given me entirely to Thee, and use it for Thee altogether.

Saturday, April 7.—At 9.10 saw Alec off, the last of him for more than a year, perhaps for ever. Thank God he is saved, and will meet me in Heaven. O God, bless him and make him a blessing. May he do good not only to the bodies, but also to the souls, of many on the ship.

How solemn to think of my arts course being finished. Five years' study come to an end. Blessed be God for His goodness to me during it, and especially for His goodness to me during this last session. I must yet pray and pray and pray that He may use me for His glory, for, unless He do so, my life will be useless.

Friday, April 20.—The crowning day, veritably the end of my arts course. I rose in the morning, and began packing. At 11 went to the Synod Hall to the graduation ceremonial, and was capped M.A. The degree sought for has been obtained with not one slip. Oh, how thankful I should be to God for His great goodness! The degree sits lightly upon me. I hope I have already laid it at the Master's feet; it will do little good if not given to Him.

His degree thus obtained, instead of proceeding next autumn to the New College to begin his divinity course, he resolved to spend a year at home. It was undoubtedly a wise resolution. Though his health was not actually injured, yet the incessant application of these five sessions had been a heavy strain, and he benefited now by an interval of work somewhat lighter and of a different kind. It proved also a fruitful year in other ways. Part of each day he was occupied in tutoring the sons of a neighbouring laird, the rest he gave to going on steadily with his own reading. It must already be clear enough that he was not the kind of student who only works when under the stimulus of lectures and examinations. It was a happy circumstance that his most intimate school and college friend, George Johnston Ross, now the minister of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Westbourne Grove, had also a tutorship that winter in the same parish. There were almost

daily meetings, with abundant "heart affluence in discursive talk." Though trained in the same curriculum, and looking forward to the same great work of the Christian ministry, the two friends had each his own idiosyncrasies. In some respects each was almost the complement of the other; all the more could each contribute something to the other's intellectual and spiritual growth. But the most important fact of that winter was the beginning of what may be called a definite apprenticeship for his future work. To assist his father, the young graduate began a Bible class, which steadily grew till it numbered nearly 100. He held meetings weekly in schoolhouses and other places up and down the wide parish, and even occasionally occupied his father's pulpit or the pulpits of neighbouring ministers. The singular power that in after years swayed vast audiences at once began to manifest itself. There could not, in any case, be a more critical judge than a fellow-student, nor a more competent one, in this case, than Mr. Ross, and he gives it as his deliberate opinion that George Macgregor never surpassed some of the addresses delivered to a few poor cottars and crofters that winter in the parish of Ferintosh.

The Free Church of Scotland requires of aspirants to the ministry a theological course of four years after the completion of the university curriculum.

This training George Macgregor received at the New College, Edinburgh, during the years 1884–1888. Here his course was one of the highest distinction. In a class including an unusual number of able men he obtained, at the close of the first session, the first place in two of the lectures he attended, and the second place in Hebrew. At the commencement of his third year he gained the highest scholarship open to competition, which carried with it the post of tutor or assistant lecturer in Hebrew for the following year. In the exit examination at the close of his course, after an extremely busy winter, and amid the anxieties of two calls to the ministry which were already pressing upon him, he stood second, only a fractional difference separating him from the first. Year by year he threw himself with all the energy of his nature into those congenial studies. All who knew him speak of his thoroughness. His Hebrew pointing, for instance, was about as nearly perfect as any human thing, speaking generally, can be. His ability and weight of character made him to be looked up to by his fellow-students, and in his last session he was one of the presidents of the Theological Society.

It seems to have been during his university course that he passed through an experience referred to by himself in a striking letter[1] years afterwards. To

[1] See p. 190ff., letter of September 18, 1897.

most thoughtful men some experience of doubt comes during those years of study and enquiry, and in a nature so serious as his, with an understanding so vigorous, the process could not but be a searching one. In the Divinity Hall, where he had to study Scripture evidence and cognate matters more closely, questionings were re-awakened from time to time; but the main battle had been fought and won before. Perhaps, from the vantage ground of the strong, unshaken faith of after years, he paints this period of scepticism in colours somewhat too dark. Those who knew him best, knew how essentially positive and non-sceptical his mental habit was. A condition of doubt was to him intellectual misery. He must have certainty for his rapid, eager, and, before all things, practical mind. A man of this type, once the old unquestioning certainty is disturbed at any point, inevitably feels as if the whole structure had collapsed, and is reduced for the time to a state of intellectual despair. This was what happened in George Macgregor's case. One truth, which to him had been as unquestionable as the law of gravitation, was rudely shaken, and until it was built up again on a surer and more stable foundation, he felt as if in utter doubt of many things. But a sceptical denier, or in the smallest degree hostile to anything Christian, he never was. Nor did he himself, perhaps, regard the matter at any time quite so gravely as his words

might imply. One does not find any point where the way to that career, which for years had lain before him as his life work, seemed closed; when he felt it impossible that he should ever be a minister of the Gospel. Only some time-honoured foundations were gone, and the fabric must be reconstructed from its base,—a long and laborious task.

I was trained up (he writes) in the strictest possible way to believe in the [verbal] inspiration of the Bible. But the faith that was the result of this training utterly gave way, and for a time I lost all faith in the Bible as inspired. I became an utter sceptic. But, amid all my scepticism and doubt, there was one thing that I could not doubt. That was, that I was not what I ought to be. I was a sinner. Sin was a fact in my life. It was the discovery of this *as a fact* that led me back to the Bible. I found it dealt with sin as no other book did, and understood sin as no other book did. Other books spoke of evil, vice, crime; this of sin. I began to see that the inspiration of the Bible did not lie so much in its being a miraculously accurate book, as in its being *a book written from God's point of view.*

Thus, "he fought his doubts and gathered strength." Doubt is perilous when conduct as well as belief is made an open question, and the questioning, dissolving intellect is accompanied by a careless life. From this peril George Macgregor was preserved. Though perplexed for a while on

many points, he never let go his faith in God, or his efforts to help others. Prayer and reading the Bible were not less but more precious during these days of darkness, because it was only through them that he could hope in time to find the light again. And so, in time, he reached it. He would not again make for Holy Scripture the claims which, as a child, he had been accustomed to hear; claims which it does not make for itself, and which he had found that the facts do not support. But he had proved it gloriously true as the Word of God, the discovery of both man's need and God's remedy, the Book in which, in Dr. Moule's[1] striking phrase, God "has had His way" from first to last. His faith was all the more strong and precious because it had not been gained without a struggle, and the strenuous intellectual labour of his student days was turned to noble account in his future ministry.

The letters of this period shew some of the after-undulations of the storm he had passed through. In his outspoken way he speaks his mind on what he considered an inadequate handling of some of the difficulties of belief.

January 12, 1885.—I do not like this way of treating Apologetics. It has almost made some of us infidels. Searching into these rationalistic theories of the Life of

[1] *Veni Creator*, p. 53.

Christ is disagreeable work, and one raises difficulties which are hard to settle. This writer seems sometimes to be afraid to go to the very dregs of infidelity in his statement, and this leaves in the mind a vague sense of uneasiness that the rationalists have not been answered. Still, when one has, as I have, fought these difficulties, not as mere theory, but as stern reality, as matter of life and death, and still feels the "miry clay" of doubt and unbelief clinging to him, it is a little disagreeable to have to go into the battle again.

Here is one of several outbursts of enthusiasm over the illustrious Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament in the New College, Dr. A. B. Davidson.

To his Sister.

December 21, 1885.—Dr. Davidson is, as I have so often said, making the Old Testament a new book to me. It is becoming to me so much more Divine, my belief in its Inspiration is ten-fold strengthened, and that by the very man whom a large number of our worthy people wanted to oust from his chair as being one of the "higher critics," for the dire offence of seeking to find the truth in regard to the people of God and His revelation to them. On Thursday we had a magnificent lecture from him on Elijah. It was simply splendid. It was almost impossible to take notes. We just sat and listened entranced. His style is so exquisite, just prose poetry, and the thought is so deep and so instructive.

In the end of March, 1888, George Macgregor left the New College a well-equipped young theologian.

He possessed a good deal more than that "decent and respectable acquaintance with the literature of his profession," which the great William Cunningham used to urge every aspirant to the holy ministry to aim at. Especially he was deeply versed in the Bible. He had read the Old Testament through in Hebrew. The Greek Testament he knew intimately, and great portions of the English Bible he could literally repeat by heart. For a minister of Christ there is no learning equal in value to this. It is a profound truth which Dr. Robertson Nicoll expresses in aphoristic form. "The seed which grows is the Word of God. The seed which does not grow is the word of man."

I BELIEVED, AND THEREFORE HAVE I SPOKEN

CHAPTER IV

I Believed, and therefore have I Spoken

> "I am longing to get the harness on, and get into active work for my dear Master."—*Letter to his Father.*

WE have seen the home influences amid which the young boy grew up. He was always an earnest and serious child, and in a household where the work of Sunday was the great business of the week, and the Communion season the great business of the year, it was natural that the thought of the Christian ministry as his life work should be early before his mind. During the school years in Inverness his religious impressions were deepened. Dr. Black's recollections of Alec, the older brother, during that period, are more distinct than his recollections of George. This is natural enough. A difference of three years in age is a great difference in the case of young boys, and the older brother was besides of a franker nature, and more ready to utter himself. But the reserve of the younger lad covered a deeper and a most receptive character, and in after years the lessons of Dr. Black's preaching, and of his Bible class, were often thankfully recalled. We do

not find any definite point which can be marked as a conversion. The boy had not to enter the Kingdom through a great sudden crisis; he was in it, as it were, almost unawares. No doubt he was aided by this elder brother's strong decision for Christ. But in their first winter in Edinburgh it was clear that both were children of God. We have seen how, in a letter to his father, George refers to the chilling effect of study on the spiritual life. But this is only when study is pursued to the neglect of devotion. One does not know whether the young student was acquainted with Charles Simeon's famous advice to one who consulted him about sending a young man of peculiarly evangelical principles to Cambridge. "If he come," wrote Simeon, "without a full determination to conform in all things to college discipline and college studies . . . he will do incalculable injury to religion."[1] Whether he knew the counsel or not, it was the line upon which he acted. "Serving the Lord" made him "not slothful" in those various studies which for the time were his business. So, all the while, his spiritual life was growing. The ministry which he attended during these years was that of Dr. Alexander Whyte, in Free St. George's Church, and his journals contain many notices of the deep effect produced by Dr. Whyte's intense and profoundly spiritual preaching.

[1] Dr. H. C. G. Moule's *Charles Simeon*, p. 184.

Afterwards he was associated with Dr. Hood Wilson's congregation, and to Dr. Wilson also he (like Henry Drummond, and so many others) acknowledged a life-long debt.

During these years (writes Dr. Wilson) he came much about us. He always impressed us with his intense earnestness. He was a devoted student, and did not allow outside work to interfere with his studies, the benefit of which appeared afterwards in his thorough equipment for his work as a minister. He had times of nervous depression, and at such times used to go to Professor Laidlaw or come to myself. The Professor was very helpful to him thus as otherwise. The strain of overstudy or bodily ailment (he often complained of his head) largely accounted for these experiences.

In his last university session we found him, like a strong runner panting for the commencing of his race, eagerly looking forward to the time when his life work of preaching should begin. Most of the Churches have as yet made little definite arrangement for the practical training of young ministers. In Scotland the old theory was that the divinity student should never enter a pulpit until he was "licensed to preach the Gospel." It was like forbidding him to enter the water, and then expecting him to swim at the first attempt. One may conceive what the ordeal was for the young aspirant who, never having had the opportunity of addressing the smallest

meeting, had to make his first trembling attempt in presence of a large congregation. Many who with proper training would have made excellent ministers broke down under so violent and unreasonable a test. These were the "stickit ministers" of a former generation. Things are different now, but to this day a man must largely depend upon himself to secure what may be called an apprenticeship in the noble arts of preaching and ministering. Many men, of course, are engaged during their college years in home missionary work, and many preach incessantly, not seldom to the detriment of their studies. The case of George Macgregor shews that there is no necessary incompatibility between the intellectual and the practical preparation. It would be difficult to find any man leaving college more thoroughly prepared for his work on its practical side than he was, and this without ever once allowing those studies to suffer in which he had so greatly distinguished himself.

No doubt he had some special opportunities, but it is worth while to see how skilfully and industriously he availed himself of them. As an undergraduate, he used to help in cottage meetings, and in services held in lodging-houses and in the wards of the Royal Infirmary. Such meetings are an excellent training-school for those who wish to be ministers. The lodging-house, being the severest, is probably the

best. The cottage meeting is like a little congregation, consisting of persons voluntarily assembled; the infirmary patients cannot escape even if they would. But in the lodging-house no one need remain or listen one instant longer than he pleases, and if a man has nothing to say, or cannot say what he has promptly and interestingly, he soon finds his audience vanish, or his remarks, like those of an unpopular member of Parliament, lost in the hum of conversation. I daresay the young Highland student had some trying experiences when he first attempted work of this kind. But I doubt whether he would ever be without an audience. There is something in certain voices, and his was one of them, which forces people to listen, something that at once announces that the speaker means business and has something to say. Then he was a living, strong man. There are strong men who attract, and strong men who repel; and he was emphatically one of the former kind. The great thing, however, from first to last was that he was full of his message. He had glad tidings to bring, and his whole face and bearing proclaimed as well as his words how glad and precious the tidings had been to himself. Such means as these are manifestly prepared of God, and He does not fail to use them. The word is heard and received with joy.

The winter of 1883–84, which was spent at home,

at Ferintosh, was marked, as we saw, by his first definite efforts in preaching. To his father, who was now over sixty years of age, and in somewhat failing health, his son's assistance in the parish would in any case have been invaluable. But what the son was enabled to do was, by God's blessing, something very different from the mere keeping-up of services. It was a time of refreshing and revival. There was a quickening, in the first place, in the young graduate's own soul. We saw the earnest thoughts and prayers with which his university course ended. But this winter there seemed to come to him a fuller sense and realising of the great fact of union with the Son of God. He once told Dr. Moule how it was on a night that winter, in the course of a solitary homeward walk across the moor, that the words *Christ Who is our Life* flashed upon his soul with a quite new force. The familiar words were like a fresh revelation from God, and that moment, within the little space (as he described it), which might be covered in half-a-dozen paces, his spiritual horizon was changed for the rest of his life. With this new baptism of power and illumination, he went forth to teach and preach to others, and the result, under God, was the quickening of many souls.

The Bible Class was his first work, and his own special department. He was an admirable teacher, most lucid and painstaking, and he excelled in im-

parting knowledge of God's Word. His object in this class, however, was not merely to give a better knowledge of the Bible, but to bring those young men and women to Christ. He used the *Pilgrim's Progress* to set forth the nature and course of the Christian life, and the journal shows the earnest prayer with which every meeting was attended. At the end of the year the young people gave him a warm tribute of their gratitude and appreciation, but there was more living and abiding proof in lives won to the Saviour.

Reference has already been made to his first efforts at preaching that winter, and the impression made. A very distinct recollection is left of my own first hearing him, about a year later. It was on the last Sunday of the year 1884, in the Free Church of Elie, in Fife. The text was Isaiah liii. 6, "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all"; and before he had spoken three sentences we felt that a new preacher had arisen, who would yet go far, whose words would tell upon the world. In the outward details of the preacher's art he seemed to have complete mastery from the first. His power of speech may have been hereditary: his father spoke with remarkable ease. But the father's style was Johnsonian; the son's was strong, nervous Saxon. His clear, incisive mind seemed by a kind of instinct so to arrange and divide the subject, as to

make it not merely easy for the audience to follow but impossible for them to do anything else. No one could mistake his meaning, and no one could fail to be interested.

But these things were on the surface, the garnishing of the dish. That he spoke admirably was indeed much, but the deeper question is, What did he speak? The answer was never one instant in doubt. What he spoke was the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and he spoke it to others because he had first known it and found it to be the power of salvation to himself. It was the message of a personal Saviour. And this, be it remembered, was while this young man was still passing through college, engaged in hard study, entering new fields of enquiry, sometimes obliged (as he tells us) to abandon old positions and readjust his beliefs to new facts which he had learned, with some attendant uncertainty and even, at times, doubt. But there was no doubt or uncertainty regarding the great theme of his preaching. Here his feet were on the rock. These facts were clear and certain to him as his own existence—his need, God's love. Man's need was met, salvation found, in the appearing and work of the Son of God; and it was as a soul on fire with this joyful conviction that he spoke to constrain his brethren to accept the same offered love. The note of urgency is less heard in modern preaching than in the days of the

fathers. But here was one who sounded it unceasingly from first to last. For even as a student he had heard the message of command, "*Compel them to come in.*"

The summer of 1885, after his first session in divinity, was spent in work of an interesting kind. He went out to Nova Scotia, and took charge for four months and a half of a small congregation at Bridgetown, in Annapolis county. To himself this was always a happy and beautiful memory, and his labour there is gratefully remembered still. No one who knew him will be surprised to read that almost from the first day the little cause rapidly grew. The young student had during these months to discharge all the duties of the regular ministry, excepting, of course, dispensing the sacraments; and the experience was hardly less profitable for himself than for his congregation. At the end of the season he writes:—

To his Father.

September 14, 1885.—My work here is now over, and looking back on it, as I do with a feeling of the profoundest thankfulness, I seek to say and feel, "Not unto us, Lord, not to us, but to Thy name be all the glory." The Sabbath morning attendance has increased from 25 to 170, the afternoon from 50 to 150. There was no prayer meeting, but, once begun, the attendance increased from 8 to 42. The amount raised for church purposes has risen from $100 to $450. I find it very, very hard to get away. The people

have asked me again and again, have said that they will call me as soon as they can get through the preliminaries, and offer me $750 and a manse if I will stay. I of course told them that my going home is a settled thing; and so now they are looking forward, in spite of all that I can do to dissuade them, to my return in spring to remain finally with them.

The work has been hard, but strength has been given, and now at the end I feel strong and vigorous. I have preached since May 1st about fifty times, and written thirty-six new sermons. The want of books made the sermon writing very hard, but constant contact with the people and observation of their weaknesses, their trials, temptations, and difficulties was more valuable than any library.

The last remark is noteworthy, as coming from so intense and unwearied a student. A young preacher's first discourses are apt to be distressingly academic and bookish; this young preacher knew instinctively the antidote, "constant contact with the people." His journal shows, however, what this meant. If he complains of having few books, he mastered those he had, including such works as Janet's *Final Causes*; and, above all, he spent a long time every day over his Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament. Entries such as these recur with almost monotonous frequency—"A day spent in pretty hard work"; "A day of hard and incessant work"; "Nothing worth recording: hard, busy work as usual"; "Read eight chapters of Hebrew, and then finished 1 Kings"; "A day of hard Hebrew

work. Read ten chapters, and finished 2 Samuel. That makes 3½ books this month already." He was always a rapid worker, and the combination of rapidity with persistence enabled him to accomplish an amount which to men of more deliberate habits would appear almost impossible. With his sermons he took great pains. Nearly everything he preached that summer seems to have been written twice over. He was a merciless critic of his own work. "Finished first writing on Proverbs iv. 24, but am not at all satisfied with it"; "Began re-writing on Zechariah xiii. 1, with no very great success. My preaching power at present is low: Lord, may Thy power be mighty"; "Read the book of Nahum in the morning, and tried to write on Matthew xxv. 10, with very poor results." But in spite of his own unfavourable judgment, work done with such faithful diligence and such constant prayer could not be in vain. The whole journal is full of cries and longings for the Divine help, and the answer came.

Through all the busy New College years there was the same combination of hard and eager study with devoted home missionary work. During the summer of 1886 he was in Glasgow, acting as student-assistant to the Rev. John Riddell, then minister of Paisley Road Free Church, one of a band of men whose names will long be honoured in connection with evangelistic enterprise in that great city. Here,

amid very different surroundings, the young assistant showed the same devotion, the same preaching power, and the same aptitude for reaching men, which he had shown among the pleasant hills and farms of Nova Scotia. There was abundant variety in the work. Often it presented quaint incidents, and at times a spice of danger, yielding queer reminiscences which he sometimes, though rarely, made use of afterwards in his addresses. During the next long vacation (1887) his employment was different: that of Hebrew tutor and lecturer, preparing men about to enter the Divinity Hall in the rudiments of the language. But he could play the one part as well as the other, and his class all recognised not only his scholarship and accuracy, but his force of character, his patience, and his devotion to the great work to which he and they were alike looking forward. During his last winter at the New College he was again engaged in Home Mission work, in the district of Gorgie, to the west of Edinburgh, then a mission under the charge of his honoured friend, Dr. Wilson, and of the Barclay congregation. Here also his labours are thankfully remembered.

Some extracts from his letters home will show the spirit in which those years of study were passed.

To his Eldest Sister.

November 13, 1884.—I find the position I have taken

[in the scholarship examination] carries some influence with it. It is my earnest desire that that influence should be used *altogether* for Christ. . . . We have great cause to be thankful for the spirit that animates our Hall. It is a flat contradiction to the pessimistic views of some who are constantly sighing and groaning for the good old times. I wish those who sometimes say hard things about us young men—and I know it is easy to find ground for them—would just instead pray very earnestly for us. It would help us to become better.

I enjoy the Hall immensely. I have already made some splendid friends, true brothers in Christ, and I trust we may be helpful to one another. Being actually in the Hall seems to bring one's life work very near, and as I think of the enormous responsibilities I sometimes almost faint. Oh, Forrie, what need we have of grace to sustain us, what need of the prayers of all God's children! The only thing that sustains us in times of fainting is just words like these: "My grace is sufficient"; "My God shall supply *all your need*"; "Ye are complete in Him."

A letter a few weeks later describes the visit to Edinburgh of Messrs. Studd and Stanley Smith.

It was a splendid sight to see these muscular young fellows earnestly pleading with the students to be reconciled to God through Christ Jesus, and that those who were believers should "come right out from the world" for Christ. A very great impression was made. About 150 men went down to the station to see them off. Smith had to address them again for a little, and when he got into the carriage they surrounded the door and sang, "Stand up,

stand up for Jesus," and other hymns. It was all the more remarkable because there was nothing that even the most rigid could call sensational in the meeting from beginning to end. I do believe that God blessed the word. It was an evidence how He honours those who will take Him at His word, and come "right out" for Christ.

The passage which follows is remarkable as showing how early he had grasped the truths to the enforcing of which so much of his after-life was to be devoted.

February 25, 1885.—How is it with yourself in these days? "Fightings without and fears within," I suppose. There may be the old enemies to fight, but we must remember our help is in the same Lord. If we have failed in the past, must it not just have been because we were fighting in our own strength instead of trusting in our Lord? I believe that most of the evils from which we suffer arise from thus taking the matter into our own hands. How often we strive and struggle after holiness, say after likeness to Christ, as if it were a thing to be given us as a reward for our striving. I don't think it is so. *Salvation by faith, I believe, means not only justification by faith, but sanctification by faith too.* Oh, to what might we not attain, if we were to surrender ourselves entirely to Christ, and trust Him by His Spirit to work out His likeness in us!

Twelve months later, in a letter written after a slight attack of illness, there is a characteristic burst of impatience with some of the subjects, historical controversies and records of ancient heresies, which he

was obliged to read for examination. The sense of the Church's coldness and need of revival oppresses him. Something must be wrong, when the Church has so little hold of the masses on the one hand, and of so much cultured opinion on the other. He has no doubt for himself what is needed. The Church must go back to the Bible, and as men reverently search the record of God's revealed will, the spirit of enlightenment and power will be given. He tells his sister something of the fresh spoil he has himself found in the Bible during his recent illness. It is interesting to see his favourite *topical* method of studying Scripture, book by book, already in full operation.

February 22, 1886.—My illness broke off my other studies and sent me to my Bible, and there I have had many a rare feast. I have read and marked very carefully Matthew, Luke, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Timothy, 1 Peter, 1 John, and 1 Corinthians. Some of them are glorious.

Take 1 John, for example, and examine it. Perhaps you may not have time. If not, tell M——, she might like to do it; or Bessie, but she might take Ephesians. Take 1 John, and find what is said (1) of forgiveness of sins; (2) of eternal life; (3) of abiding in Christ; (4) of love—its definition and duties; (5) of faith and its result; (6) of the purpose of the Incarnation; (7) of the character of the children of God. The search and the arranging brings you into very close contact with the Word, and gives a rare

feast. My favourite text in the whole epistle is, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Isn't it splendid for poor, ignorant, deluded mortals such as we are, perplexed and beaten by the problems of life? How we need light! Is it not just that yearning that makes that hymn, "Lead, kindly light," such a favourite? and to think that in God there is no darkness at all! Truly to know Him *must* be life eternal.

Ephesians again is profoundly interesting. Examine it, and find what is said (1) about the things that are "of Christ"; (2) about riches or richness; (3) about walking; (4) about grace. I think my favourite text here is chapter v. 8, with the gracious promise of v. 14, "Christ shall shine upon thee."

Thus the *Lehrjahre*, the years of apprenticeship for the holy ministry, drew to a close. A more various and successful training for all parts of the work it were difficult, one would think, to find. But one other experience remained, which was to give to his ministry one of its most characteristic and impressive features. Work in a colony and some travelling in America had already given glimpses of a bigger world than that of ordinary work at home. His interest in foreign missions was strong and deep. It could not be otherwise in one who had been four years a member of the Barclay Church, a congregation whose missionary members are in many distant lands, and whose monthly magazine is a constant budget of fresh missionary news. His interest in the matter,

however, did not begin in the Barclay; it dated from his boyhood. But now there came a personal call: would he himself go forth as a missionary to the Mohammedans? The call and the result are described in a graphic note by Dr. George Smith, the biographer of Martyn, Carey, and Duff, and the honoured secretary of the Free Church of Scotland's Foreign Missions.

On the sudden death of the Hon. Ion Keith-Falconer, at Sheikh Othman, near Aden, on the 11th May, 1887, it was my duty to find a successor among our young ministers or senior divinity students. In the session of 1887–88 I sent for George Macgregor, whose visit to Canada I was aware of, whose combination of scholarship and spiritual zeal I knew that winter. "Will you," I said to him, "take up Ion Keith-Falconer's mantle if the committee call you to be his successor?" His face lighted up immediately, and then clouded as he replied that he could not believe he would be found worthy of such a call, but, God helping him, he was ready to accept it if offered to him. A medical examination resulted in his being forbidden to work in the tropics. His disappointment was intense. His was the will, hearty, immediate, and self-sacrificing; and God, I doubt not, reckoned it to him in his future career. I next met him at the Liverpool conference of 1896, and again in my own office last year. The call to South Arabia had baptised him with the spirit of foreign missions, which he always lifted to the highest spiritual level.

His journal shows the thoughts and questionings of those days.

1887. *Monday, November* 28.—A crisis. Got a letter from the Foreign Mission secretary, asking me to go to Sheikh Othman, to succeed Ion Keith-Falconer. Spent the day in a state of great excitement. O God, guide me in this great matter, and, whether I go or not, make it a means of stirring me and drawing me nearer Thee. Spent the evening talking with George Ross about it.

Tuesday, 29.—Still in considerable agitation about this matter. Saw Dr. Wilson about it. He does not give me definite advice, but inclines to think I am not fit for it (physically). Wrote Alec. Then set myself down to the duties of the day, although not feeling in good form for them. Lord, make use of this to draw me nearer to Thyself. In the evening went to Principal Miller's,[1] and had a chat with him.

Wednesday, 30.—Anxious still, but calmer. Had a long talk with Dr. Laidlaw, and afterwards saw Dr. Smith again. I have got a little longer time for deciding.

Saturday, December 3.—In the morning heard Gardner, of Toynbee Hall, London, give a most interesting address. Much impressed by the self-sacrifice of the man. Lord, give me more of it.

A beautiful letter from his father had left him entirely free to decide as God might lead him. The letter is a noble example of the spirit which Christian

[1] Of the Christian College, Madras ; then on furlough.

parents ought to show when their children receive God's call to work abroad.

FERINTOSH, *December* 3, 1887.

MY DEAR GEORGE,—

Your letter has put me in great perplexity. I took two days to think over it and pray over it; and yet I can give no opinion. It is a post of high honour you are desired to fill. The elements that should go to decide are your fitness for the post, the leaning of your mind, and the suitableness of the climate for your constitution. If soldiers and sailors go in the service of an earthly queen, the soldiers of the Cross should not be behind them in heroism. Though I shall be very sorry and heart-sore to part with you, if the matter is of the Lord, I can neither say good nor bad; and if it is His, I hope He will make the way clear. The first missionary and founder of the station fell a martyr to a noble cause. I trust and pray the grain of wheat that died may bring forth much fruit. Pray that God may guide you wisely. With all our love,

Your affectionate father,

M. MACGREGOR.

It is evident how intensely the work attracted the young man, but it is also evident how entirely he left himself in God's hands. If it were God's will that he should go, he would go forth with joy. If that were not God's will, he would cheerfully remain. He was medically examined by Sir Thomas Grainger Stewart, whose adverse judgment is briefly and calmly noted in the journal. "He

decides *against* my going; so that settles the matter. Lord, I pray Thee to make use of this whole matter to bring me nearer to Thee." The eminent Christian physician whose judgment was thus decisive has himself recently passed away. It is impossible, therefore, now to ascertain the grounds of his opinion, but it is not improbable that the peculiar nervous energy which enabled George Macgregor to work with such intensity, the keen spirit, like a sword, all the while wearing through the bodily sheath, was a condition of peculiar danger for tropical climates.

So God kept him for work at home, and joyfully and unsparingly he did that work. Yet one often felt that his heart would have been abroad had the way been open. He was content, and never hankered after what a Higher Wisdom denied. His part in the great cause of missions was, without slackening one instant in the diligent pressing forward of his work at home, to labour, as few have done, for the quickening of the missionary spirit in the Church of Christ, and to rouse others, who might not be debarred from responding as he was, to hear the missionary call. How he did this, will appear in its due place.

ABERDEEN MINISTRY

CHAPTER V

Aberdeen Ministry

IN the Presbyterian churches, when a student of divinity has completed his theological studies and passed his last college examination, he is examined by his Presbytery, and thereafter solemnly licensed to preach the Gospel. He is then called a probationer, being understood (though this is not compulsory) to pass through at least a year's "probation" before becoming eligible for ordination to a pastoral charge. For most men the experience gained during this intermediate period is not merely of value, but is indispensable. The more diligent a student has been, the less, as a general rule, is his acquaintance with the practical side of the minister's work. In that work, more than in most things, one must try his wings before he can fly. If he can begin as assistant to a minister of power and experience, that is the most profitable; but he should also have some scope for independent work, so as to develop his own resources. For most men it would be the most serious disadvantage to be required at once to assume the full charge of a large congregation. In

numberless cases it has checked or stunted a man's whole intellectual growth, while others have been overpowered by the mere physical strain.

There are exceptions, however, to every rule. When George Macgregor finished his course at the New College, few of those who merely knew him as having passed a brilliant examination were aware how thoroughly, in all essentials, he was already equipped as a minister. His experience, though brief, had been remarkably varied, and his native quickness had turned it to extraordinarily good account. Let us reckon up what that experience had been. First, he had had, three years before, a whole season's experience of what was virtually a pastoral charge. Since then there had been ample time to think over any mistakes and errors in judgment, so as to avoid repeating them in another case. Next, he had done home mission work in both the chief cities of Scotland, and that under two men among the most prominent in that field of labour. He had preached and worked, further, in a Highland parish, and knew from his childhood the conditions of work in the North. Finally, he had received a foreign missionary call, and though, in his own phrase, "God blocked the way," this had given him a peculiar sense and realization of the truth that *the field is the world.* He was very young, not yet twenty-four, the youngest, possibly, of all who passed the exit examination that

season. Yet it is no exaggeration to say that not many ministers of five or ten years' standing could be found to surpass this youth of four-and-twenty, in the combination of attainment, preaching power, and even in variety of experience.

This fact was soon to be brought to the proof. A few weeks before the close of the session he had received this letter from the Rev. John McNeill:—

24, Blacket Place, Edinburgh,
16/2/88.

My dear Mr. Macgregor,—

I have learned from Mr. Murray Garden that the East Free, Aberdeen, will be glad to hear you on Sabbath first.

Kindly, therefore, "bundle and go." Send a post-card to the above-named gentleman—"Aberdeen" is all the direction it needs—stating the train by which you intend to travel, and you will be met at the station.

Go and tell them of Jesus as though they had never heard of Him before. Neither they have—from you.

Yours faithfully,
John McNeill.

This letter had been preceded by a telegram which had greatly mystified the young student. It was from a total stranger, an office-bearer of the Aberdeen East Church—a church whose very existence he was hardly aware of,—and contained simply the words, "Please send psalms and hymns for Sunday." He was, happily, able to accept the unexpected invitation. He

knew no one in Aberdeen, and, unaware that there was any vacancy, merely thought it would be interesting to see a new place. He preached twice on the Sunday, and conducted the Bible class for young men and women in the evening. The class was crowded, and nearly all the elders were present, which led the preacher to remark to a friend next day that he had never seen elders so eager for Bible instruction as these good men in Aberdeen! As a matter of fact, of course, the good men's motive was simply to hear him speak a third time, and to see whether his Bible-class work was as remarkable as his preaching. It is needless to say that they were perfectly satisfied. A congregational meeting was immediately summoned, and a week later, on the 27th February, it was unanimously resolved to call Mr. G. H. C. Macgregor, student of divinity, to be their pastor.

But others, too, were desirous of claiming him. The Free Church at Burntisland, whose minister, the Rev. T. B. Kilpatrick (now Professor Kilpatrick, of Winnipeg Theological College), had just been translated to Aberdeen, had already set their affections upon him, and now hastened to give him a formal call. The charge at Burntisland had many attractions. The congregation was large enough to occupy a minister's energies. It was close to Edinburgh, the religious as well as the national capital of Scotland, and situated in a county noted for the close and

kindly fellowship that unites its ministers. Of the two calls, certainly nine young men out of ten would have been wise to prefer that from the country town, and many of his friends learned with surprise that he had resolved to accept the call from the large city. It was soon clear enough that his judgment was right. Though perfectly modest, he had from experience a just estimate of his own powers. He naturally turned, therefore, to the field which offered the harder, more varied, and more responsible work; and the advice of his uncle, the Rev. John Macgregor, of Stockwell Free Church, Glasgow, confirmed him in accepting the call to Aberdeen.

The church of which he was thus to become minister, at the earliest possible moment after leaving college, was one of the historic congregations of the Free Church of Scotland. At the Disruption of 1843, all the city ministers of Aberdeen, fifteen in number, threw in their lot with the Free Church. The three most important congregations were the East Church, whose minister was Dr. James Foote; the West, then under the charge of Dr. A. Dyce Davidson; and the South, ministered to by Dr. W. K. Tweedie. The large pile of buildings, erected to accommodate those three congregations under one roof, and crowned by a graceful, if somewhat austere, brick spire, is still one of the most striking architectural features of the city. All those churches have been blessed with a succes-

sion of eminent and devoted ministers, and the same may be said of the High Church, which has occupied the western end of the building since the West Church found a new habitation for itself in Union Street. Dr. Foote, the first minister of the Free East Church, was a powerful preacher, and a man whose force of character made a deep impression on the whole community. His successor was Dr. James Calder Macphail,[1] translated in 1868 to Edinburgh. Next came the brief but interesting ministry of the Rev. James S. Candlish, son of the eminent Disruption leader, and himself one of the most learned and saintly of men. In 1872 he was made Professor of Divinity in the Free Church College, Glasgow, and was succeeded by the Rev. James Selkirk, whose failing health and eyesight now made necessary the appointment of a colleague to assume the full charge of the congregation. Such was the succession, in which to-day there is no more cherished name than George Macgregor.

The congregation had always numbered among its members some distinguished men. Principal Lumsden

[1] Of a visit which Dr. Macphail paid to his old flock, in October, 1892, Mr. Macgregor wrote:—"A time of blessing . . . It was most delightful to see the joy of minister and people at meeting again, and for myself, I thank God for it, and take courage. It proves that faithful work always gains acknowledgment, and that a minister, even though he knows it not, may be influencing, to a great extent, the lives of his people."

and Professor Robertson Smith had both served in it as elders. Dr. Robertson Nicoll was a member of the church during his student days, and a paper on Charlotte Brontë, which he read at the Young Men's Society, was one of the first indications of his remarkable powers as a literary critic. In 1888, though somewhat diminished in numbers, the church was in spirit and heart as strong as ever, and had for office-bearers men of Christian character and high standing in the community. Two or three only, because they are no longer here, may be named. In Mr. William Rose, and his brother, Mr. James Rose, of Hazlehead, were to be seen the deep devotion and prayerfulness, the liberality, and the unobtrusive delight in doing good, that do so much to strengthen a pastor's hands. James Murray Garden was, beyond dispute, the ablest of the younger men in the city, singularly clear and wise in judgment and in speech. There was something statesmanlike about him. Every word of his seemed to carry a peculiar weight and moral force, and this force, as all men knew, was the outcome of a spiritual life, reserved, but very deep and living. And Dr. William Alexander, the editor of the *Aberdeen Free Press*, was the Aberdonian of genius, the creator of *Johnnie Gibb*, and the greatest master of the old Scots speech for more than a generation. Not less was he known as the outspoken foe of every abuse, the constant advocate of popular education,

and of every reform. His heart was not worn on his sleeve; it is not his country's way to carry it there; and to those who did not know him William Alexander might seem principally a fighter. But to his friends a heart how true, and spiritual sympathies how deep and strong! The judgment of such men as these is not likely to be much at fault. Some surprise was natural when it got abroad that the East Church of Aberdeen, after considering several ministers of standing, had put them all aside, and chosen unanimously a student in his last year in Edinburgh. It seemed a rash experiment, but they were not rash men who were making it. Those who knew the man of their choice felt sure that that choice would not be regretted; and no one wonders at it now.

With a solemn sense of responsibility, yet full of the joy of service, George Macgregor now stands on the threshold of his life work. To all appearance few could be better equipped and furnished at every point. But one thing was to be added to complete his training. During the weeks which intervened before his entering upon his work, there fell upon him two severe bereavements. His venerable father, whose health had been failing for several years, and had steadily declined during the winter, died on the 30th of April. And, just four weeks later, came a second blow, the heavier because so totally un-

expected. Dr. Alexander Macgregor, the brother whose influence and example had so deeply affected George's spiritual history, was suddenly called away at the age of twenty-six. These things gave a peculiar seriousness and depth of tone from the first to the ministry that was about to open. It seemed also to quicken that presentiment which was with him, as these letters showed, in his student days, and never afterwards left him, that his own time for work would not be long. In any case, it was a trumpet call bidding him redeem the time.

FROM HIS JOURNAL

Monday, April 30, 1888.—Dear father died at 2 p.m. The end come at last. O Lord, sanctify this trial to us all. May we be more consecrated. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

Wednesday, May 2.—Still in Edinburgh. Awfully restless in the morning. Called on Dr. Wilson, and said goodbye to him. Received license as a preacher from the Edinburgh Presbytery along with Gardner, Telfer, Macleod, Meiklejohn. Left by a night train for home.

Thursday.—Father's funeral. A very large turn-out of ministers and friends. Uncle John here, all the Presbytery and many others, and a large attendance of people. He is laid beside our dear mother. It was a terribly trying time for poor mamma, but she bears up wonderfully. The evening spent in sadness. We only now begin to realize what a terrible blank there is among us.

Friday.—My formal election to the Free East, Aberdeen,

took place this day. Father was looking forward to coming to my settlement, and now he is gone. Man proposes, but God disposes.

Monday, May 28.—Dear Alec died suddenly at Caterham Valley at 4.30. He complained of headache on Friday, and was in bed all Saturday. On Monday he was up. At four o'clock he was in the drawing-room, and the ladies wished him to have some tea. He went to his own room to have some soup, and while taking it gave a short cough, and threw back his head and expired. Jack went down some time afterwards and saw him. He was twenty-six. God have mercy upon us, for this is dreadful.

Tuesday, 29.—In the evening got news of Alec's death. It was a terrible shock to us all.

Wednesday.—No sleep. Up at six, and away to Dingwall. Wired to Jack to bring remains north, if possible. . . . The news has given a terrible shock to all the countryside, the dear boy was so much loved.

Straight from this valley of the shadow he proceeded to the preparations for his ordination. The brief entries indicate the kind of awe which filled his spirit, entering on so great a work in circumstances so solemnizing.

Thursday, June 14.—My twenty-fourth birthday. What a critical time in my history it is! Lord, take me to be Thine more than ever! Make me Thine in body, soul, and spirit. Grant that this era may be filled up with good service to my Lord and Master.

Thursday, 28.—My ordination day. In the house all

morning. Uncle John, George Ross, Bessie, and many other friends. Got a very solemn charge from Kilpatrick. Shook hands with the people as they left the church. This is the crisis of my life. Lord, let Thy Christ be given to me. Make me a temple of the Holy Ghost. Make my ministry successful in the highest sense. May I win souls, and build them up, that Thy kingdom may be advanced.

On the evening after the ordination, a large gathering of the congregation took place, at which the usual gifts were made to the young minister, and friends spoke words of congratulation and goodwill. His own speech was brief and modest, but set forth with perfect distinctness the spirit in which he was taking up the work.

When the news [of my election] was first told me by Mr. McNeill, I felt, as I feel to-night, that the work was too great for one so young and so comparatively inexperienced as I, and my first impulse was to withdraw my name altogether. Yet, as some of my most trusted friends (Principal Rainy being one of them) said, "When a congregation comes like this to any one and says, 'We wish you to be our pastor,' that is a request no one dare set aside." When I thought over it, it seemed to me that God's hand was pointing me to be your minister, and to try to serve Christ as best I could. I want to thank you for the great kindness you have ever shown me. No sooner had I accepted your call than I got some letters from members of the congregation that greatly encouraged my heart, and helped me to keep from regretting the

decision I had come to. I have also to thank the congregation to-night for the great sympathy that they have shown to me in the trying circumstances in which, by God's providence, I have been placed. In the midst of heart-rending sorrow I have felt myself supported by knowing that many among you were praying for me that these sore trials may be blessed.

Now that I have come among you, as your minister, I wish to say one word. I feel profoundly conscious to-night of my own utter unfitness for the work with which I am now face to face. One of the great blessings which arise from a feeling of that kind is that we are driven back on God. And why should we despair of any work if it is true that there is a living Holy Ghost? What I desire to do is to have faith in God as a living God. And if it is God's work, and we are merely His servants, why need we fear? I have to ask for your forbearance. There are mistakes which a young minister is almost sure to make, and which I shall certainly make. I have to ask your forbearance for these. . . . I do expect and believe that I shall have the most cordial co-operation of every single member of the church. I think it is a simple disgrace to some churches that they leave almost all the active work of the church to be done by the younger members. And this is perhaps why it is often inefficiently done. . . .

I am determined, God helping me, to spend and be spent in your service, and I do trust and believe that you will do all that you can to help me. I draw towards the young people, and expect that they will rally round me. And I expect sympathy and help from the older people, and the benefit and experience of their Christian life. And

from all I do expect, and demand as my right, your earnest prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be earnest and faithful in His work among you. I am a great believer in joy, and in putting as much joy into my work as I can. I go on in hope and faith. It is Christ's work, and I believe that His kingdom is coming. I pray that you and I may take as our motto these words: *I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only.*

A memorable address, surely. What strikes one most about it, perhaps, is its illustration of the remarkable unity of his work, and of the spirit he worked in, from first to last. Here, in sentence after sentence, are precisely the truths and ideas on which he most insisted to the very end. "We are driven back on God." "Why despair of any work, if there is a living Holy Ghost?" "I am a great believer in joy." "I demand as a right your prayers for me." Thus in faith and prayer he commenced his ministry in Aberdeen. Outward and visible success, seldom equalled, soon attended it. The inward and deeper results only the Day can declare.

ABERDEEN MINISTRY

(continued)

CHAPTER VI

Aberdeen Ministry (*continued*)

THE East Church seemed by the year 1888 to have passed its meridian. In Aberdeen, as in other large cities, there was a steady exodus of the wealthier people towards the suburbs. New churches in the west and north-west districts were attracting many families formerly connected with the city congregations. Dr. George Adam Smith was at the height of his influence and popularity in Queen's Cross, and Mr. Kilpatrick had just come to Ferryhill. Other pulpits were not less ably filled. It was in the nature of things that the town churches must suffer. The membership of the East Church had been slowly declining for several years, and loyal and steadfast as office-bearers and people were, it could hardly have been imagined by the most sanguine that an era of great progress and expansion was before them.

It was not long, however, before the ebbing tide was checked, and a new flood tide began. Figures, though a poor indication of spiritual results, have an undeniable tale of their own to tell. The member-

ship of the congregation, when Mr. Macgregor was ordained, was little more than 500. At the close of his first winter's work, when, according to the practice of the Free Church, the annual returns are made up in March, it amounted to 626. By March, 1890, this had risen to 776, and this again rose to 901 in March, 1891. The capacity of the building would not allow the increase to go on at this phenomenal rate, but progress still continued steadily and surely, till in 1894, when Mr. Macgregor left to go to London, the roll of membership contained 1,037 names. The growth of numbers is only one part, and often the least part, of true congregational prosperity. But other, and in some ways deeper, signs were never lacking. The liberality and the activity of the people in Christian work increased in at least an equal measure. It was a beautiful sight to see the East Church in those days. The brightness and kindliness of the young minister, who remembered every one and had the right word ready for each, the peculiar authority that always sounded in his message and appeared in his bearing as the messenger, the loyal support of the office-bearers, the heartiness and affection of the people, the animation and intelligence of the Bible classes, the joy of young disciples and the sober wisdom and maturity of older ones—all made a strong impression upon those who came to take

part in the services at communions and other seasons, as a picture not to be forgotten.

From the first his ministry was of a markedly evangelistic type. To nine-tenths of those to whom he preached, the great truths of the Gospel were as familiar as they were to himself. In the county, and especially in the city, of Aberdeen, the educational standard is higher than anywhere else in Scotland, and the people's intelligence may sometimes form one of the preacher's great difficulties. It seems impossible to tell them what they do not already know, or to break down a certain self-esteem and self-righteousness which such knowledge creates. Wesley, in his own keen way, long ago noted in his *Journal* what is still apt to be the fault of a Scottish audience. "The greatest part of them," he wrote, "hear much, know everything, and feel nothing." "The generality are so wise that they need no more knowledge, and so good that they need no more religion" (Wesley's *Journal*, May 15 and 21, 1774). This, no doubt, was during the age of Moderatism, but there has always been enough truth in it to impose on the Scottish ministry a special duty of speaking to the heart. From the beginning it was Mr. Macgregor's great aim to do this, and while taking full advantage of the intelligence, interest, and kindliness already there, to kindle all with the flame of real devotion

to Christ. The great necessity of conversion was the paramount fact in his preaching. Our Lord's words, "Ye must be born again," were the constant key-note. A personal relation to Christ, attained through a personal decision by the grace of God's Holy Spirit,—this was in his view essential; and if there was not this, nothing would make up for the absence of it. It was no new gospel in Aberdeen, nor in the East Church; the only novelty was the urgency with which young and old were pressed and constrained to choose and decide. The reserved Scotch nature, which prefers that the preacher should state his case clearly and logically, and then leave the audience, like a jury, to make up their minds at leisure, was not sure at first whether it relished so definite and urgent an appeal to conscience and will. But this doubt was not of long continuance. The granite melted. To the joy of the godly elders and other praying people, many were found from the first offering themselves for admission to church membership. And this was in no formal or conventional spirit, for the young minister had made it abundantly plain that he invited none to join except "such as were being saved." Those who came forward, therefore, were those who could joyfully say, in most cases of a time quite recent:—

O happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God!

In February, 1890, was held the first special mission in the East Church during his ministry. The missioner was the Rev. J. J. Mackay, then of Glasgow, now of Hull. What this brief mission effected, by God's blessing, will best be told in Mr. Macgregor's own words, in a letter sent to Mr. Mackay a few weeks afterwards. The letter is interesting in more ways than one, in showing his definiteness of aim throughout his whole ministry, and not merely at times of some special effort, and also his keen insight into the nature and working of a religious movement.

Your visit to us was a time of great joy and blessing. The only fault we had to find with it was that it was so short. This was all the more to be regretted, as the amount of preparatory work to be done was so great. A congregation in which there has been no such effort made for over twenty years does not all at once come into line. Prejudice has to be broken down, doubts have to be removed, ere all will throw themselves into the work.

Owing to this fact and to the shortness of your visit, what one might call the indirect results have been far more important than the direct results, and it is of the former I wish chiefly to speak.

But first of all I would thankfully acknowledge the direct and immediate results of the meetings in decisions for Christ. These have been much more numerous than one would judge by the after-meetings. Several cases we

knew nothing of at the time have already come under my notice, and I believe the lapse of time will reveal many more.

The indirect results of the work I would summarise in this way :

1. The breaking down of the prejudice in the minds of many against evangelistic work. The prejudice arose from ignorance of what it was, and from disgust at a shallow, superficial kind of evangelism that is too common. The removal of this clears the way for future effort.

2. The awakening of Christian workers to the fact that immediate results are attainable, and ought to be looked for. Your visit was a time of special blessing to the workers. They learned better how to work, and their faith and consecration were deepened.

3. The breaking down of stiffness among the people, and the begetting of a willingness to speak about spiritual things. I think I have spoken to more people at their own request since your visit than during a year previous.

4. The awakening of professing Christians to a sense of short-coming. You did better work at the Bible readings than you knew. They were a means of bringing many to a truer idea of what following Christ meant than they ever had. The quickening that the Lord's people received during these days is making itself felt in all our work.

5. The kindling among us of the spirit of prayer. This is perhaps the most visible, and in some respects the most remarkable result of all. The Wednesday Prayer Meeting feels it, and where we used to have difficulty in getting one to pray, we now get six. We have started a prayer meeting on the Sabbath morning before service

and our little hall is crowded to intercede for divine blessing on the work of the day. And along with this desire for prayer comes expectation of blessing, and when these two come together, blessing is never far off.

How much of that week's happy harvest was due to the patient, prayerful toil of the previous eighteen months! One who is now an earnest minister of Christ tells how strongly prejudiced he had been at first against the young preacher, whose praises the rest of his family and many friends were constantly singing, and how keenly he resented the searching, faithful preaching which came so close to the conscience and seemed, as it were, to demand a reply for Christ. But God's Spirit was dealing with him, and though often he would fain have turned away and gone to some other church, he still felt that he could not, until matters were brought to a clear issue. The crisis came during that mission week, when the young man, blameless and honourable hitherto, but without a definite relation to Christ, and so without power in his life, made the simple, whole-hearted surrender by which we receive all.

Thus the six years in Aberdeen constituted from the first a definitely evangelistic ministry. Its great object, that is to say, was to bring men and women to God. A ministry of this kind is apt sometimes to be disparaged, not, surely, for the end it aims at, but for the methods which it is supposed to employ. In his

letter to Mr. Mackay we have seen Mr. Macgregor refer to the mischief which a shallow kind of evangelism had done, and the distrust awakened by it. Nothing could be more distasteful to him than such a so-called evangelism, and nothing more unlike what he had set before himself from the first. If he was anything, he was a student, and an unsparing worker. He was also a born teacher, and had the knack of making others both think and work. If he made his Bible class work in a remote Ross-shire parish, he was not likely to alter his method in a great intellectual centre like Aberdeen. And if he had altered it, he would not have retained, however earnest his appeals, the intellectual respect of such men as were numbered in his congregation. With the methods, then, of a thinker and a student; with thorough preparation for the pulpit and for every public appearance he had to make; using every means, moreover, to promote intellectual improvement, by literary societies, unions for Bible study, and every similar effort; he pursued, all through, the one great aim of bringing souls to God, and building them up in Him.

From his first appearance in the pulpit of the Free East Church (writes one closely associated with his work there, Mr. Thomas Ogilvie), he awakened the interest and won the hearts of our people.

He was essentially a popular preacher, but his popularity

was not gained by any sensational efforts. These he did not require, for he possessed in happy combination the qualities of all acceptable speech. His fluency and grace, distinctness of enunciation, and musical voice enabled him to speak without effort in our largest churches and halls, and gave to his earnest message a rare charm and persuasiveness. Full scholarship gave body to his discourses, and his rich imagination brightened them with telling and apposite illustration. But the true secret of his success lay deeper than any natural endowments—in his spiritual enthusiasm, his fervid earnestness. This fused all in a glowing zeal for souls.

He felt he had a message,—and he could make men feel the burden of it—"Repentance towards God and faith to our Lord Jesus Christ." In the faith of this message, he believed in looking for and expecting results, and his hope was not fruitless. He had much to encourage him in Aberdeen, more especially in his work among young men and young women. Striking instances, not a few, of the results of his ministry have come under my own observation. Individuals, and in one case a whole family together, were led to faith in Christ.

I think (says another) the ministry of the first three years was more productive of definite results in the way of conversions than the latter years. These were largely devoted to an expansion of what has been called holiness teaching, and the result was evident in the deepened spiritual life of the congregation. It was particularly helpful to those—and they were many—who, like myself, had been brought to decision, and were endeavouring to take a definite stand on the side of Christ.

The visit to Keswick in 1889, to be described in the next chapter, was not only an epoch in his own life, but an era in his ministry. It did not, however, change either the direction or the end of the latter, though it perhaps indicated more specifically what was to be pursued, and the methods by which to pursue it. Evangelical preaching in Scotland has never contented itself with preaching forgiveness only, or failed to hold up a lofty standard of Christian living. It has ever taken St. Paul's words to the gaoler in their full extent, not: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be pardoned, but, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be *saved*; and its appeal to burdened souls has always been, not merely to cast their guilt upon the Sin-Bearer, but to surrender themselves wholly to Christ as Saviour and Lord. It must be noted, too, that Mr. Macgregor's relation to the Keswick movement was, after the first deep impression it made on him, one of remarkable independence. After his first memorable visit in 1889, he did not return for three years, various causes making it impossible for him to be present at the Convention either in 1890 or 1891; and when he returned in 1892, he did so, not merely as a listener, but as a speaker. In the interval he had been working out, under the Spirit's own guidance, what he had at first learned and received. This gave his teaching a peculiar weight. He could say with truth, "I neither received it of man, neither was I

taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." In the Aberdeen ministry the effect of the Keswick movement on the young minister was seen in a more definite aiming after holiness, and a more constant emphasis laid on the call to life in the Spirit. It was seen also, as time went on, in a different way, in the more frequent calls addressed to him to assist at conventions and gatherings for the promotion of holiness all over the country.

In any case his fame would soon have spread. It is not possible, in a comparatively small country like Scotland, for a youth fresh from college to be planted in a large city congregation, and forthwith add to it a hundred members every year, without the country knowing of it. He was soon invited far and near to assist at communions or conduct missions. He spoke in the General Assembly on religion and morals. He was sent to preach for two months at a Continental station. He was invited to speak at the Perth Conference. This remarkable gathering, held in early autumn in the beautiful city by the Tay, dates from 1861, and is associated with tender and solemn memories of the revival of 1859–60, with such saintly ministers as John Milne, Andrew Bonar, and Alexander Moody Stuart, as well as devoted laymen like Brownlow North, Hay MacDowall Grant, and the eighth Earl of Kintore. But the recollections of some of the older attenders of the gathering

go farther back, to an earlier movement in which some of these also took part; and it was here, when George Macgregor first appeared on the platform in 1891, that the tall, slender figure, the earnest voice, the mingled tenderness and deep seriousness of manner, the loving and winning presentation of the Gospel, struck some with a strange sense, as of something familiar. It was like the voice they knew once, that now for fifty years had been singing the new song in glory. It was Robert McCheyne come back.

Midway in the happy Aberdeen ministry came Mr. Macgregor's marriage. On the 15th July, 1891, he was married to Miss Agnes Amelia Rose, elder daughter of his devoted elder and fellow-worker, Mr. James Rose, of Hazlehead. "Seldom," said the *Congregational Magazine* in its notice of the wedding, "has a minister chosen a bride from amongst a family whose antecedents and immediate surroundings have been more favourable to the development of every Christian virtue." It proved, indeed, a union of ideal brightness and happiness. He found in his home a true temple of peace. His wife entered heart and soul into all his work, and cheerfully accepted the many absences from home which that work, especially in more recent years, entailed. Their children are George Hogarth Carnaby, born in Aberdeen, November 26, 1892, and Agnes Rose, born in London, November 21, 1894.

Of the great congregational activity and prosperity of these years the most evident outward token was the splendid suite of halls and class-rooms, adjoining the church, formed by the purchase and alteration of the South Church, after that congregation had removed to a new building. This was accomplished in 1893, at a cost of almost £5,000, and minister and people saw with thankful hearts the admirable appliances and facilities for work which were now in their hands. With so much of progress and gain, these years had also their tale of heavy loss. The three men whose names figure largest in the records of the Free East Church at that time were all removed by death; Mr. William Rose, and Mr. Murray Garden, within a ew days of each other, in March, 1891, and Dr. William Alexander in February, 1894. Mr. Rose had passed the allotted term of human life, and Dr. Alexander had nearly reached it, but Mr. Murray Garden was called away from his wife and children, his great work and still greater promise, at forty-five. The effect of these things seemed to be an added seriousness, a yet deeper intensity of purpose and consecration, marking Mr. Macgregor's ministry.

Another death there was, which was deeply felt by many in the congregation and by the minister. On the 31st March, 1894, Professor Robertson Smith passed away, and Mr. Macgregor's tribute to his

memory was so warm and so striking that some sentences from it may be quoted.

It was Dr. Smith's misfortune, as a teacher (he said), to be some years in advance of opinion in his Church. He had to break new ground, to train men to new ways of thought, and because he was in advance of his age, like all others who have been in advance of their age, he had to pay the penalty in the hostility, and even hatred, which he aroused; hatred no doubt in a measure balanced by the extraordinary enthusiasm which his cause wakened in the minds of many. He had to fight a battle for liberty, and although he suffered in it, he had the satisfaction, ere he died, of seeing victory won along the whole line. His removal is a great loss to the cause of Christian learning, for Dr. Smith, although a rigorous and scientific critic of the Bible, was a reverent and a believing critic. The Jehovah, Whose Revelation of Himself he found in the Old Testament, was to him the God and Father of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Bible was to him the Word of God. In the Bible he heard God speak, and what made him so brave and firm and persevering in his studies, and so faithful in his criticism, was his determination to find out, so far as man could find out, the way in which this God had revealed Himself. And now he has passed away from us, from the place where knowledge is in part to the place where we know even as we are known. We may pray that in an age when critical views are spreading so fast, and when rationalistic views are so prevalent, men may be raised up who, like our friend who has just gone, may be valiant for truth and for the Word of God.

These were almost Mr. Macgregor's last words as an Aberdeen minister. The tie to his first and well-loved charge was about to be severed. A few weeks later, he was inducted to his new congregation in London. But the church and the city where he had served and loved and prayed could never be divided from his heart. Last spring, a month before his death, he was in Aberdeen, conducting a mission in connection with the Young Men's Christian Association. One day, with his wife, he went to Allenvale Cemetery, and they stood by Murray Garden's grave, looking westward to the old Bridge of Dee, with the noble river swiftly flowing by. There, he said, in that beautiful God's-acre, he would wish, when the time came, his own last resting-place to be. And so there they have laid him, to wait for the manifestation of the sons of God, not far from the scene of the strenuous and happy ministry of those six years.

A NEW SECRET OF POWER

CHAPTER VII

A New Secret of Power

IN the summer of 1889 Mr. Macgregor came for the first time to the Keswick Convention. He was just five-and-twenty, at the close of the first year of his ministry in Aberdeen. The solemn events of the previous year, the death of his venerable father and his brother's unlooked-for summons home, still cast their shadows over him; he was still feeling the awful solemnity of life with that peculiar emphasis which bereavement gives. And he had learned a great deal through his year's ministry. To every young minister that first year, while doubtless one of the most profitable, is also one of the most trying seasons in his life. The strain of the weekly preparation, the constant production of new sermons, is hardest then; and most men are visited at times with a painful feeling, either that they must soon exhaust themselves, or be driven to ring the changes on the same great truths over and over again. This difficulty, however, Mr. Macgregor seems scarcely to have felt. His mind was exceptionally quick, fertile, and well stored, and besides, he had so much experience already

gained. The practical difficulties, however, of the pastorate were felt by him as by others. No doubt he was painfully conscious of many mistakes, opportunities not rightly turned to account, instances where his words had not been words in season, where he had been severe when he ought to have been sympathetic, or lax and negligent when he ought to have been faithful.

The annual breathing-time of his summer holiday is for the faithful minister a special opportunity for taking heed to himself and to his flock. While he is away from his people for a little, it is his business not merely to recruit his physical energies, but to take a fresh view of his work and his sphere of labour, their special needs, special openings and opportunities, as from a little distance. Special prayer for these during one's time of rest brings its answer in the times of after-work. Such was this young minister's mood in the summer of 1889. Deeply thankful for a year of much encouragement and not a little progress, hopeful for the future, but aware of many of his own and his people's shortcomings, and of the special dangers attaching to the very prosperity and outward growth which was so cheering, he was longing, on their behalf and his own, for a fresh secret of power, a new baptism of the Holy Ghost. Some of his fellow-ministers had told him of the quickening and joy they found in the gatherings at

Keswick, and he resolved to begin his first summer vacation there. A young stranger, knowing no one but the friends whom he travelled with, he arrived at the place which is now, to some, so peculiarly associated with him. He came with a definite purpose and expectation. His was not the attitude of mere curiosity, to find out what this new thing was. Some of us hardly ever knew him in that attitude on any subject. His mind was so quick and eager that he hardly ever seemed to come to any enquiry in a vacant or neutral condition, needing to have the first beginnings of interest awakened for him. You generally found that, whatever the subject, he had already read or learned and thought about it to a considerable extent, and, with a fair general idea of what he was to hear, was prepared to receive and to form his judgment of all farther information that might be forthcoming. In coming to Keswick, then, he did not come in ignorance. But he came as a learner, and as seeking for himself, and for the people over whom he had been set in the Lord, the secret of a more abundant life.

The story of the remarkable spiritual movement, associated for the last five-and-twenty years with the little Cumberland town, is told in the next chapter. There, too, the part which for eight successive years (1892–99) George Macgregor bore in the Convention is set forth by a skilful and loving hand. Here we

are merely to trace the immediate effect of that first visit to Keswick, and what followed from it, in the young preacher's own life and ministry. Very close and sacred are the glimpses of his soul-exercise at this time which the journal reveals. But in any case a biographer would, I think, be well justified in giving to the world such a record of spiritual experience. And, indeed, in this case some of the more intimate and personal facts have been made public by Mr. Macgregor himself, in the touching and remarkable testimony which he gave at the Convention of 1893.

July 22, 1889.—Left for Keswick for the Convention. Travelled with Mr. Sloan and Mr. Currie; found a room, and got ready for work. The principal speakers are Mr. Moule, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Brooke, Mr. Fox, etc.

Tuesday, 23.—I cannot speak of the joy of this afternoon. It is like Heaven. The whole city is possessed by people consecrated to God. The whole of this day's work was most humbling, and led me to commit myself to God in acknowledgment of my own special sins. The Bible reading in the morning and the evening meeting different quite, but are most splendid.

Wednesday, 24.—A most blessed day, in which I committed myself into God's hands to be kept for Him by Him. I consecrate myself this day to be the Lord's.

Thursday, 25.—In Heaven still. Nearer, my God, to Thee. Every avenue of my being is filled with Christ. I

desire to rest in Him. What a Saviour He is! . . . It is so striking to see the many beaming faces of those who have found joy in the risen and blessed Christ.

Friday, 26.—Closing day of the Convention. There was a solemn prayer meeting in the morning. . . . I definitely committed myself to God to be filled with the Holy Ghost for His service.

Saturday, 27.—Mission Day. The Convention is closed, but a missionary meeting held at 10 o'clock. Scores of young men and women offered themselves as missionaries, and several hundred pounds were offered in token of blessings received. Had a sail on Derwentwater.

Sunday, 28.—At Keswick, a day of unspeakable blessing. In the morning heard Mr. Moule preach in St. John's Church on Psalm xxxi. 19, 20, "How great is Thy goodness." As he laid before us God's goodness, I was completely overcome, and went home and had a passionate fit of weeping. Rested in the afternoon. Heard Meyer preach. Then a very solemn after-meeting, conducted by Dr. Elder Cumming and Mr. Evan Hopkins. This was a final dedication of ourselves for ever to the service of Christ.

That Sunday evening he wrote to his sister.

Sunday Evening, July 28, 1889.—The Convention is now over, and to-morrow we go back to the world. To say I have enjoyed it is to say nothing. To call it Heaven may seem hyperbole, but it is perhaps the best and shortest way of speaking of it. I fear I shall never be able to speak of it. The joy is unspeakable and full of the glory. I have learned innumerable lessons, principally these: my own

sinfulness and shortcoming. I have been searched through and through, and bared and exposed and scorched by God's searching Spirit. And then I have learned the unsearchableness of Christ. How Christ is magnified here, you can have scarcely any idea. I got such a view of the goodness of God to-day that it made me weep. I was completely broken down, and could not control myself, but had a fit of weeping. And I have learned the absolute necessity of obedience. Given obedience and faith, nothing is impossible. I have committed myself into God's hands and He has taken me, and life can never be the same again. It must be infinitely brighter than ever. To-morrow, D.V., I go to Glasgow, and then pass on as rapidly as possible to Inverness. I want to have some time with George Ross. Then to Dingwall, where I shall get your letters. I hope you had a good day. God bless you all.

Love from your boy,

GEORGE.

These entries will, of course, be read by different people with different eyes. Here was, no doubt, a deeply emotional nature, responsive to spiritual influences as an Æolian harp is played on by the wind. But if any one should suppose from this that the effects of this solemn experience were only, or even chiefly, in the region of the emotions, his mistake would be of the greatest. Mr. Macgregor's nature, in fact, presented a union, difficult for those who did not know him to understand, of feeling, intellect, and strength of will. If feeling "overpowered" him for the moment, it was not suffered to carry him

away. No impulse was allowed to master him for which he could not find intellectual justification; and then what he felt and experienced his resolute will turned into a force of life. That these days at Keswick were a turning point in his life, there is not the smallest doubt. That they made his later ministry what it was, is equally certain. To say that he sometimes appeared to claim for this experience and its effects more than the facts altogether warranted, is only to say that, though remarkably enlightened and strengthened by God's Spirit, he remained a fallible human being. But no one who knew George Macgregor, either as a man or a minister, before that crisis and after it, could question that he found then a new secret of strength both for his own life and for his work.

What was it, then, that he found? The misunderstanding, and even some measure of distrust, with which what is popularly known as "Keswick teaching" is sometimes regarded, is doubtless due in part to a way of speaking as if this teaching were a new discovery, unknown until the last twenty or thirty years. Divine truth is always a fresh discovery to the soul that finds it, and it is not to be wondered at that young disciples, ready to testify of what the Lord had done for them, and unaware of how He has led and manifested Himself to His children in former days, should have proclaimed their experience as a

kind of new thing in the earth. Such language is, of course, unfounded, and may arouse prejudice. It has never had the least countenance from the wise leaders of the Keswick movement. Mr. Macgregor never failed to make this fact emphatic at every opportunity. There is no newly-discovered truth or teaching in the case. It is only that certain parts and aspects of Scripture truth, which have sometimes through neglect been allowed to fall into the background, are here asserted with special force, coherence, and conviction.

The facts which Keswick emphasizes are chiefly these three—the place of faith in sanctification, the reality of the mystical union between Christ and the believer, and the personality and power of the Holy Ghost. As regards the first of these, it comes as a corrective of one-sided statements of truth. We are saved by faith. This salvation, God's gift, is undoubtedly, as regards its idea, received all at once. "By grace have ye been saved, through faith" (Eph. ii. 5, 8); "he that believeth on the Son hath eternal life" (John iii. 36). Yet it is not less true that salvation is a process, advancing through successive stages. He who in faith casts himself on God in Christ is forthwith justified and forgiven. From that hour he has the life-giving Spirit of God implanted, which works in him to make him holy, and he is kept by the power of God unto the gloriously complete and

final salvation (1 Pet. i. 5). Thus in one sense the believer is σεσωσμένος (Eph. ii. 5, 8), one who has been saved; in another he is still only σωζόμενος (Acts ii. 47), one who is being saved, or guarded unto salvation. But in whichever aspect salvation is regarded, whether as the beginning of the new life or as its completion, whether as acceptance and forgiveness or as the whole sublime process by which man is brought into full conformity and fellowship with God, faith is equally the condition of our receiving it. Faith itself, be it remembered, is no mere human act; it is a grace, a gift bestowed by God. But there can be no doubt that, even while recognising this, Christian people have not always fully perceived the part which faith plays, not only in the first stage of the new life, but all through it. In our justification, faith, which lays hold on Christ, is the condition of everything; but once that blessing is received, some seem to think that in the main the work of faith is done, and that some other grace, implying more personal effort, should take its place.

This feeling or impression,—for such it is, rather than a definite opinion,—is described by Mr. Macgregor in his little book, *So Great Salvation.* To make his meaning clear he puts it in an extreme form.

You let God justify you, but thought you had to sanctify yourself. For the pardon of sins you trusted the blood of Christ; but for the overcoming of sin you trusted in self-effort. You believed that justification was a gift of the Lord Jesus Christ to be received by faith, but refused to believe that sanctification is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that the power to overcome sin is a gift of the Lord Jesus received by faith. You thought that God justified you, and then left you to find your way to heaven alone—or at least a good deal alone (pp. 105, 106).

It sounds like blasphemy when thus clearly put into words, but does not something not unlike it in substance lurk still in many minds? Against it every writer on sanctification, worthy of the name, from Marshall in his *Gospel Mystery* downwards, has protested and warned. There is a difference, undoubtedly, between our first acceptance with God and the life of new obedience which then begins. To speak broadly and generally, we are passive in the first, active in the second. Yet, in a deeper sense, we are active in both and passive in both. In both we surrender and yield ourselves entirely to God; and in both everything we do is received from and bestowed by Him. And faith, the action and energy of soul by which we place ourselves in union with God, is the condition of both. Not only are we justified by faith; we live and walk by faith. "We through the spirit by faith wait for the hope of

righteousness" (Gal. v. 5); we are guarded by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Experience sadly shows us that the moment faith, the soul's union with its Lord, fails or weakens, that moment we are defeated and fall. A calm, progressive, and victorious life is only possible where trust in the All-gracious and Almighty Saviour is maintained moment by moment.

The second great fact is the reality of the mystical union. This simply means that our Lord's words mean what they say. When we are made one with Christ, then His power is really made ours for the warfare against sin. When we abide in Him, we are really and in very deed kept by Him. At no point is there greater need of wise and cautious statement than here, for unguarded and exaggerated language may go very near the claiming of actual perfection. We shall see how Mr. Macgregor himself did not always quite escape this danger. Yet we are to understand broadly that such a promise as, for instance, "*My grace is sufficient for thee*," is not to be thinned down or emptied of its meaning. If we are one with Him, and His life is being manifested in us, then He is able to keep, and His grace is sufficient. There is here not the smallest claim to perfection. That is in this life impossible, alike on the negative side of avoiding every transgression, and, still more manifestly, on the positive side of attaining full con-

formity to the Son of God. But without any thought of what is unattainable, it is certain that in the daily warfare the issue in innumerable cases would be very different if we could but remember, and act upon the remembrance, that Divine help is ever at hand for all God's children to claim, and that He means us to claim it, and to live in the joy and power which it brings.

The third great fact is the Power and the Personality of the Holy Ghost. This requires less explanation. Alike in the ancient creeds and in the doctrinal standards of the Reformation this great commonplace of Christian doctrine, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, is duly exalted. In times of coldness the Church has comparatively lost its hold of this, and has suffered accordingly. But at present there is no article of the faith more lovingly and longingly studied, and that in every branch of the Church. In the Keswick teaching the Holy Spirit occupies a large place; and surely it is the reward of thus exalting His person that His working has been made so manifest.

Such were the great facts which, during these summer days, were so brought home to the young minister's heart and conscience. It was not that the truths themselves were altogether new. Most of what he heard was perfectly familiar. We have seen, *e.g.*, how as a student he gave strong expression to

the view that sanctification by faith ought to be insisted on as well as justification by faith. Union with the Son of God, and the power of the Holy Ghost, were already great themes in his preaching. But now all this came home to him with a new force, which he was constrained to recognise as the working of God's Spirit. And the effect was permanent, both in his own character and in his work as a minister.

The effect on himself was of a kind rather to be felt than expressed in words. But those who knew him best were conscious of it, and, which is the true test of a genuine work, increasingly conscious as years passed on. Many, I think, would say that the maturing and deepening were more striking in the last three or four years than in the years immediately following 1889. But one striking effect was very soon discernible, of a kind which may well be recorded, because it is fitted to afford encouragement and hope to others. Nature had given him a peculiarly high-strung nervous temperament. This was specially seen from his childhood in sudden paroxysms of temper, in which he would quiver from head to foot, or fling himself passionately on the floor. Even when he grew up, these appear to have sometimes recurred. It was one of those things which, because they have to some extent a physical basis, even good men sometimes almost acquiesce in. One has heard a bad temper spoken of as a "trial,"

or a "cross," as if it were like lameness, or being obliged to winter abroad, a thing to regret, but beyond one's control or power to alter, to be accepted as a permanent fact of a human personality. That it is a cross indeed, every Christian man cursed with such a disposition sadly knows. The struggle against it is often deeply discouraging; sometimes the only hope seems to be that it will mellow and soften somewhat as life advances. It was at Keswick that Mr. Macgregor first learned to think differently about this. There he learned first of all, as never before, to understand that yielding to any evil tendency, no matter how rooted in one's nature, were it hereditary twenty times over, is SIN. And God does not mean His children to live in any kind of sin, or of yielding to sin. He calls them to holiness; and when He so calls, He does not mock them by pointing to impossibilities. When He bids men seek and strive, He waits to furnish them with power, and says, Nothing shall be impossible to you. We are not concerned at present with cases where some moral evil is so clearly connected with physical or mental weakness as to render doubtful the existence of complete responsibility. Even in such cases remarkable effects have been brought about, a singular strengthening and steadying of the whole nature, through simple faith in God. At present we are concerned only with such a case as that before us,

where, as the result shows, the weakness, though it might be called "constitutional," was not in a region beyond the control of the will. In that season of self-examination and soul-abasement at Keswick, when, as he wrote, "I have been searched through and through, and bared, and exposed, and scorched by God's searching Spirit," Mr. Macgregor had a special sense of the evil, and made a special agonizing confession to God, of this besetting sin of temper. And when, after these days of consecration, he left Keswick, certainly, to a very large extent, the evil temper was left behind. From that time he was really, in this respect, a different man. Of course he never claimed, or dreamed of claiming, perfection in the matter. He would never have said, or dreamed of saying, that his inward disposition was all that it might be, or that it ought to be, absolutely conformed to the image of Christ. Man's goodness is always defective. Doubtless at times our friend was ruffled. But there were no more paroxysms, and those who knew him best knew how all but unvaryingly serene his temper was.

This suppression of an evil temper, however, though a very noteworthy thing, is only a negative effect and symptom of the life of consecration. The positive side of the matter is the great thing, and that is the surrender of the whole being to God. Those who knew the earnest Christian student, and

the devoted young preacher and pastor, might have doubted if for him there could be any further surrender than that which had already taken place. But his own clear view was that that summer at Keswick some last barrier was swept away, and God's Spirit entered into his life in full possession.

It was three years before he returned to Keswick, and then he came not as a listener merely, but as a teacher. These three years had been for him a period of steady growth and advance. The very fact that, after the profound impression of that first visit, so considerable an interval elapsed before his return, had given his thinking on all the subjects connected with holiness a relative independence. His ministry on this blessed theme was not of man, nor after man. There was something remarkable in the chain of events which led to his being invited to speak at Keswick. In 1890, the year after his first visit, he was sent by the Free Church of Scotland for two months to their summer chaplaincy at Pontresina. With his rare faculty of enjoyment, this was a period for him of intense delight, and some of the friendships which he formed then were a possession for the rest of his life. Through two very dear friends whom he came to know there, and who had been profoundly impressed by his ministry, he was invited to take part in the Croydon Convention of 1891; there Mr. Robert Wilson, the honoured chairman of

the Keswick Convention Trustees, heard him, and at once invited him to be a speaker at Keswick the following year.

Of the effect of all this on his ministry there is abundant evidence. Perhaps it may be well to say, in order to re-assure some readers, that the new spiritual strength and joy which he had found did not make him work or study less. He was justly impatient of the kind of spirituality which seems—strange that it should be so—to associate itself with, if not to foster, intellectual slovenliness or laziness. How can a man pray for the Holy Spirit to go with his words, unless he himself does his very best? In all departments of his work—study, preaching, classes, pastoral visitation—Mr. Macgregor worked as hard and unsparingly as ever. But the new power for service which he had found was seen in greater fruit and deeper results attending his ministry. And perhaps most striking of all, so far as he was concerned, was what may be called a new jealousy for God and determination that in all work for Him He alone should be looked to and honoured.

A letter to a friend, written in these days, will illustrate this :—

5, Westfield Terrace, Aberdeen,
January 15, 1892.

In the prayer meeting I am expounding the 103rd Psalm. The psalm is a delightful study. Have you ever made a list

of the blessings the psalmist praises God for? Just think of it: Forgiveness, soul-healing, redemption, coronation, satisfaction, perpetual youth, justice, revelation, mercy tenderness, pity, and so on. No wonder when we think of it we need "*all* that is within us" to praise.

In my Bible class I am giving "The Story of the Pauline Epistles": how they arose; when, to whom, and why written; and what they say. My large class are greatly interested, and, I hope, profited also.

We are now in the midst of the special mission of Moody and McNeill. There has been great interest and immense gatherings, but the spiritual results have been very small. There has been nothing of a breaking down. A goodly number have got blessing, among them several of my own folks; but there has been no general movement. Perhaps our eyes were too much on the men. Our God is jealous, and says: "My glory will I not give to another."

The little book which has been already quoted, *So Great Salvation*, is a fine specimen of his preaching and teaching during these years. It was issued in the end of 1892, with a brief preface by Dr. Moule. It has passed through three editions, and there have been testimonies not a few to blessing received in reading its concise and arresting chapters: "Man Fallen," "Man Accused," "Man Awakened," "Man Justified," "Man Kept," "Man Sanctified." In the words of Dr. Moule's preface:—

It is one of those books, never too common, in which, by the grace of God, the message of a full Gospel is pre-

sented, not only clearly, but sympathetically; not only tenderly, but searchingly; and, above all, so as to bring out proportions and connections in the "things which accompany salvation," as they are seen revealed in the Holy Word.

It is, indeed, a full Gospel, singularly many-sided and complete, which is presented in the compass of these 130 pages. Few books furnish such a *multum in parvo*, the foundation truths of the Gospel for perishing sinners, as well as the truths and principles of the higher Christian life for believers. It is an admirable setting forth of "salvation" in that wider and larger sense to which reference has been already made, the whole Divine process "by which He who is mighty to save brings men from sin to holiness, from Satan to God." As a piece of exposition, it is peculiarly clear and convincing. Sometimes the lucidity and love of analysis may be thought to carry division too far, as in the distinction drawn between forgiveness and pardon, a distinction which, though made to yield a beautiful thought,[1] is in itself an arbitrary and artificial distinction. But the chief thing about the book, and that which

[1] "Pardon is something different and distinguishable from forgiveness. Forgiveness relates to personal injuries, and restores personal relations; pardon relates to legal penalty, and remits it" (p. 83). Hence, while "forgiveness comes to us simply from the love of God," "pardon comes to us through the death of the Lord Jesus."

strikes the reader more and more as he comes back to it, is that it is so full of Christ, and points men so earnestly and lovingly to Him. Like the letters of the saintly Bishop Ken, the whole writing seems to bear the superscription,

ALL GLORY BE TO GOD.

KESWICK

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF A FRIEND

CHAPTER VIII

Keswick: The Recollections of a Friend[1]

THE little town of Keswick, in Cumberland, is a place happy in the combination of a most beautiful landscape with memories of genius and virtue. Planted on rising ground at the lower end of Derwentwater, it commands the grand vista of the lake, with its green islands and equally green bordering heights, to where, beyond Lodore, "the upcrowding hills" of Borrowdale rise, lost in one another, towards the pass of Honister. The spectator, turning to the right from that fair scene, sees Skiddaw mounting near him, with its restful mass of giant slopes, and Saddleback beyond Skiddaw, still to the right. Perhaps the point of view is the terrace of the churchyard of St. John's, and the time is towards the sunset of a summer day. Assuredly that landscape will be remembered. Travellers of widest experience have pronounced it to be one of the most beautiful of all inland scenes.

The human associations of Keswick are not un-

[1] By the Rev. Handley C. G. Moule, D.D., Norrisian Professor of Divinity, Cambridge. *See* preface.

worthy of its natural charms. I shall speak presently of its Christian interests of our day. But let us remember also that ninety-six years ago, in 1804, it became the home of a great English man of letters, a true poet, a fine prose writer, a reader and student of immense diligence, a good and high-minded man, Robert Southey. At Greta Hall, just outside the town, he lived the last forty years of his life. There his pen produced a whole library. At Keswick, *inter alia*, he wrote *The Life of Wesley*, *The Life of Nelson*, *The Doctor*, *The Curse of Kehama*, and that other epic, neglected now, but a grand story grandly told, *Roderick, the Last of the Goths.* There he edited *Cowper*, and wrote his Memoir. There also (as Mr. Hodder's *Life of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury* tells us) he sent one warm and energetic letter after another to the young patrician advocate of the victims of the factory system, to inform and animate him in the first brave enterprises of his life.

In the churchyard of Crosthwaite, the ancient mother church of Keswick, the dust of Southey now reposes. His grave is a place which may well quicken the conscience and purposes of those who desire to "occupy" with their Master's talents, "while it is day."

But our main concern with Keswick in these pages touches neither its picturesque nor its literary aspect. For just a quarter of a century now it has had asso-

ciations of another sort, which have made its name known far and wide in English-speaking Christendom. At Keswick, in 1875, under a tent in a field near St. John's Parsonage, was held a first "Convention for the Deepening of the Spiritual Life." A few hundreds attended the meetings. The occasion became annual, and now for many years, when July is closing, "the Keswick Convention" brings together an assembly of several thousands. It is, of course, difficult to count such a gathering. But it is safe to say that not less than six thousand persons are present each year for the whole or part of the proceedings. Counting a large number of visitors who come in by train for part of one day only (as always from the working population of Barrow-in-Furness), the estimate may be made a good deal higher.

The central place of meeting is a tent, pitched in a field on the skirts of the town. Here three thousand persons find room. The addresses are given from a platform set against the long side of the tent, and roofed by a sounding-board so well arranged that any speaker who articulates clearly and evenly can be heard in every corner. The tent is supplemented by one or two other meeting-places in the town. In the course of each day several stated gatherings are held: a prayer meeting at seven, always largely attended; a "Bible reading" later; then a noonday "general meeting" with two addresses, another in the after-

noon, another in the evening. As the hour for each gathering approaches, the streets present a striking scene. Pavements and road are thronged with men and women, carrying Bible, hymn-book, and perhaps note-book too, towards tent or hall, with a certain air of purpose and business about them, entirely without excitement, yet with a general air of life and brightness which is observable. We will follow them to an occasion which may be a specimen of many. It is Wednesday evening, the third evening of the series. The tent is quite full; many people, perhaps two or three hundred, are standing just outside it, all round, within hearing. On the long platform sits the chairman, a grey-haired layman, Robert Wilson, of Cockermouth. Right and left of him are a large group of men, many of whom have been or will be speaking in the course of the week; clergymen and laymen, English, Scottish, American, Colonial, and sometimes one or two from France or Germany. They represent not only various countries, but several "denominations" of the Christian Church. The tent, however, bears outside the motto: "All one in Christ Jesus"; and the diversity of ecclesiastical connexion within it is deliberately and lawfully put apart for this occasion, while speakers and hearers meet upon absolutely common Christian ground.

The great gathering is very quiet; the choir sing a few hymns during the waiting time, but this is only a

help to preparation. At the hour, the chairman calls for a moment or two of silent prayer. Then a hymn is sung by all, and prayer follows, and Scripture and another hymn. And now the first speaker is called. For nearly half an hour he is on his feet. We listen; it is a careful but quite simple exposition of some short Scripture word on the Christian's experience of sin and shortcoming, with illustrations in outspoken detail; a faithful yet sympathetic picture of the ache and weariness of many an earnest heart, or perhaps such as to startle an easy conscience into a sudden sense of inconsistency and neglect. It closes not with mere reproof, however: the speaker is too much humbled by his own memories, and too thankful for his Master's mercies to himself, to play the mere fault-finder. Rather, his last words are of the Lord's will that it should be otherwise with us, and of His provision that it may be otherwise. The address is heard in perfect silence, yet with a certain feeling of contact, sympathy, and response in the meeting. Another hymn is sung, full of those truths of peace and strength which lie in the Presence of the Saviour, and in the covenanted power of the Spirit. Then the second address is given. No previous mutual arrangement is ever made between the speakers; it is the more remarkable how often the second utterance at a meeting is a true sequel to the first. So it is to-night. Listen; the address is little other than a summary of

the promises of God to His conscience-stricken people. The speaker is gathering up into one bright and orderly mass what the Divine Word says about the power that can subdue iniquities, cleansing and controlling the heart; what it reveals about a provision in Christ for our sanctification, as large and wonderful as that for our acceptance; about a work of the Holy Comforter, arising in His fulness in the soul, the effect of which is a living Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at the springs of thought and will, which can indeed "make all things new." He points out, from unquestionable Scriptures, that the great condition on our part to the reception of these gifts of love and power is the faith which, "confident in self-despair," turns to the All-sufficient to do His merciful work, and to triumph in us over our enemies where we, in our own name, have failed. All this he carries home into detail. He deals explicitly with our failures in temper, in use of the tongue, in truthfulness and thoroughness, in kindness and consideration, in moral courage, in the sense of the entire ownership of our Lord applied to common life. Not in the abstract, but in the concrete, he puts promise and need side by side. Perhaps in a passing sentence he lets us know that in his own soul the great need has been met by the yet greater power of God. He takes care to warn us against the dream of a real perfectionism, as if for one moment we could stand

before the Holy One as our Judge except in the merits and righteousness of our Head. But then with all the more energy he says that we *are* called to "walk and to please God" as our reconciled Father, and that He can and will enable us to do it, if we will yield ourselves to Him, and rely upon His promises for inward victory.

The address is over. Another hymn follows, calm and solemn. It sings of "my great need and Thy great fulness" as they come together, and of the holy result. A short "after-meeting" closes the occasion. Any who wish to do so are asked to stay, and a great majority do stay. The last speaker once more is called forward. He concentrates thought and will upon decisive action. For "Keswick" is nothing if not practical and definite in its purpose. We are appealed to, point by point, to own our personal need to the Lord without reserve; to take up His promises as meaning all they say; to look Him in the face, and then and there (for why should we delay?) to "commit the keeping of our souls" to Him; to expect His response; to go quickly forth to put it into use in common life, and at once. Possibly the speaker asks those who care to do so, silently and unobserved, to rise a moment to their feet, as if in physical affirmation of the spiritual act. But this is never pressed, nor is it by any means always even suggested.

The great gathering at length quietly disperses, under the shadows of the summer night; a few, perhaps, staying a little longer for a word of personal conversation with any of the leaders of the Convention.

Such is a fair example of a "general" meeting. It is needless to go into detail over other like occasions, nor to describe such happy accessories as occasional out-door gatherings on an island, or on the pine-clad "Friar's Crag," nor the many private hours of conference and prayer, a few friends together, in chamber or in field. Only let us not forget the two Sundays, shutting in the six days of the Convention proper, when the several places of worship in the little town are crowded. St. John's Church, of which we have spoken already, shall be our choice. The kindly vicar invites always some of the clerical leaders to occupy his pulpit on those two days, and the Lord's table is always prepared, twice each Sunday, for the multitudes who are sure to attend it. It is morning service. The beautiful church is more than full. Singing and responding are like the sound of a flood. The lessons are read to-day by Presbyterian clergymen. The clergy of the parish are assisted in ministration by well-known visitors. One of them preaches, and the sermon is but another tent-address as to its theme. It assumes the hearers to have found the sure resting-place of acceptance in "Christ *for* them,"

and it directs them to the "riches of the glory" of what may be their happy experience through faith's welcome to "Christ *in* them." Perhaps they are reminded how the language of the English Communion Office will so soon preach in its own majestic way the message of Keswick: "Here we offer to Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies; humbly praying Thee that all we, who are partakers of this holy Communion, may be fulfilled, *filled full*, with Thy grace and heavenly benediction."

How did the Keswick Convention take its origin? It was somewhat thus: Thomas Harford-Battersby, Canon of Carlisle, and Minister of St. John's Church, Keswick, was invited by a friend to attend a series of meetings on the spiritual life, at Oxford, in the summer of 1874. Saintly, deeply thoughtful, diligent and loving in his pastoral life, he had yet long felt a certain unrest and dissatisfaction, and a persuasion that a better and stronger experience was possible. The Oxford meetings, occasioned by the presence in England of an American layman, Mr. R. Pearsall Smith, did not at first satisfy Canon Battersby. Not quite without reason, he felt and dreaded a tendency in some of the utterances towards a doctrine of "sinless perfection." But before the week was over, with noble candour, he had recognised that such a tendency was an accident of the teaching, not its essence. Its essence was just the ancient, catholic, apostolic truth

that He, who is our Righteousness in the mystical Union, is, in it, our Sanctification also. Our true secret for deliverance from the power of sin is not indeed, God forbid, a careless and unwatchful walk, but, in a watchful walk, a trusted Christ. "I rest upon Thy word; Thy promise is for me." And Thy promise is, "I will write My law in their hearts"; "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not sin against Me"; "He is able to keep you from falling"; "The God of peace sanctify you wholly."

Canon Battersby returned from Oxford as one into whose life a new light had fallen from heaven. He had experienced not the least disturbance of old fundamental convictions. He had not so much found "new truth" as "new trust"; which is one of the deepest needs of our troubled time. And "in that light of life he walked," shedding round him a peculiarly beautiful radiance in home and parish and neighbourhood, till, in July, 1883, on the eve of the Convention of that year, his "travelling days were done." Blessed is his memory and his example.

As we said above, he founded "Keswick." The first Convention, in 1875, was small. But the institution coincided with a great spiritual wave, or rather tide. The wonderful evangelistic labours of Mr. Moody had lately stirred England and Scotland. These impressions were succeeded by, or rather grew into, a widespread longing for that "closer walk with

God" to which, assuredly, the life of known acceptance is meant always to be the avenue. There was everywhere, in circles of evangelical belief, and amidst great differences upon important points of doctrinal detail, a thirst for a fuller and more restful holiness. The Keswick gatherings met that thirst; can we doubt that the will of God was in the matter? And they rapidly grew to a volume and an influence quite unforeseen by their founder. He drew around him a circle of friends whose experience was akin to his own; notably Charles Fox, H. W. Webb-Peploe, E. W. Moore, Evan Hopkins, Théodore Monod, Henry Bowker, Robert Wilson. Of these "the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." They were joined afterwards by other men, varying in many characteristics, but alike in this, that, holding firmly to the eternal foundation of pardon and peace through our atoning Lord alone, they had themselves felt, in a more or less marked experience, His power in their own souls, to conquer, to purify, to calm, by the Spirit who makes Him "a living, bright reality" to faith.

"Keswick" is no sun without a spot. It has had its difficulties, its fluctuations. There has been cause at times to take care lest one glorious side of truth should be so exclusively presented as to be deflected into an error. Those who have attended the meetings have not always carried the message of Keswick into

practice. But I dare to say, once more, that these trials have lain in the accidents, not in the essence. By the mercy of God, "Keswick" has been kept, in the main, scripturally sober, and balanced in its spiritual doctrine. It has had a genuine quickening and kindling power in the Church. It has raised the average standard of conviction in evangelical Christians as to their Master's claims on them, and His promised gracious power in them. It has been a great promoter of Christian labour at home, and yet more remarkably in the mission field. It has attracted little attention on the surface of the world. Large as the meetings are, I think they have never once been noticed, even in the briefest paragraph, by the London daily papers. But, under the surface, "Keswick" has been, and is, a quiet power, full of practical blessing, far and wide.

It was at the close of a morning meeting in the tent in 1889 that I was met, as I went out, by a young clergyman, who came to shake my hand and make himself known. He was George Macgregor, of Aberdeen. His immediate purpose with me was to speak of his hope to organize a series of meetings in Aberdeen akin in aim to the Convention, and to invite me to take part. We had a short conversation, and my new friend left in me the impression on the spot that I had, indeed, met a brother in Christ, a man whom it was good to look in the face, and whose

words spoke at once of bright and fine intelligence and of a true heart, in which the Lord manifestly dwelt. I learnt from him long afterwards that he had come to Keswick as a critical observer, a little disposed to wonder what English teachers had to say that he had not learnt already further north. But some of the addresses had led his soul, already prepared by earlier experiences of blessing, "not to new truth so much as to new trust," if I may use that phrase again. In particular, a sermon in St. John's Church, on Psalm xxxi. 19, 20, had been used by the Spirit to give him a remarkable revelation of the greatness of "the goodness laid up for them that fear Him, and wrought for them that trust in Him before the sons of men." That experience was evidently altogether abnormal. He told me how, after service, he had returned to his lodging hardly conscious how he went, and, once alone, had passed through a vision of the glory of the grace of God, from which he awoke to common consciousness as from another world, with tears of wonder and joy, and a sense almost of exhaustion "by the abundance of the revelations."

From that summer of 1889 till this past spring our friendship, to my exceeding benefit, lasted, only to grow warmer and deeper to the end. The projected visit to Aberdeen was paid in the March of 1891, and I found then how deep he had penetrated into Divine secrets while already the soundness of judgment and

balance of thought were as conspicuous as they were at the last. In the summer of 1892 he was again at Keswick, his first attendance since 1889. At once he took his invited place as a speaker, the place which was never to be vacant on that platform till this present year. It was remarkable that, with next to no personal intercourse with older Keswick teachers in the interval, he began his Convention ministry at once as a man who had completely grasped the vital elements of the message, and who knew already how to apply them with far-reaching wisdom to the facts of inward and outward life. To my observation, his eight years' work as a "leader" was a singularly equable progress along a settled and stable line, "from strength to strength." He assuredly "grew in the grace and the knowledge" of the Lord, downward and upward. But the growth was to the last in a truth which he had been enabled to lay hold of from the first.

I was never able to attend at Keswick quite regularly. Some of the occasions when Macgregor's power was most markedly felt occurred in my absence. But I was present with him at five Conventions, including his last, and some recollections stand out with special vividness as I review the years. He is before me at this moment as he gave a plain, manly, heart-moving account of his experiences in 1889, at a meeting where it was arranged that two or

three of the speakers should explain, as an illustration of their message, why they were there at all. I still hear his very tone and see his look of pure spiritual happiness as, on another occasion, he closed a noble address on the joy of the Lord with the verse—

> I cannot tell the art
> By which such bliss is given;
> I know Thou hast my heart,
> And I have—heaven.

And I recall with much love and delight an evening in the "Pavilion," in 1898, when it was my lot to speak first, and he followed me. My subject was Onesimus, the runaway bondservant, come back to his master. Macgregor had prepared an address on a theme quite different. But just as he entered the hall, of course quite unaware of my intended line of exposition, he felt himself drawn to the lesson given by the law of the Hebrew's seven years' slavery, to be followed, if the slave should so elect, by "service for ever." That address abides with my heart. Evidently struck and stimulated by the coincidence, Macgregor seemed carried beyond himself, and pressed home the "splendour of the thought" of a bondage to the Lord willing, irrevocable, everlasting, with the manner of one who was possessed by it in his own whole being at that hour.

But I must not attempt a long recital of memories. The details given are enough to place his delightful

personnel more clearly than ever before my "inner eyes." How often, entering a meeting, perhaps to give an address, and feeling my unfitness for the work sensibly enough, have I looked for and caught his affectionate smile, assuring me of the strong help of a true brother's prayer. How often have I gladly seen him rise, with his tall figure and most expressive face, and expected from him, what by the grace of God never failed me, some word luminous with scriptural truth well studied and clearly presented, and full of "the heavenly gift," just to the purpose of some need of my heart.

Our private intercourse was, after all, small in quantity. Perhaps four or five times altogether, and for very short stays, he was my guest at Cambridge. The last such visit, when Mrs. Macgregor was with him, was in February, 1900. Two or three times I met him as a fellow-guest in that delightful house of rest and kindness, Copsley, near Outwood, in Surrey. Otherwise I saw little of him, and our letters were never frequent. Nevertheless he was, for nearly eleven years, till he passed from us, no small part of my life. We never met but I felt a new sense of deep spiritual brotherhood, along with a rebuke and a stimulus which I thankfully remember. His social brightness and power of enjoyment were contagious. His admirable good sense, when matters of common interest were discussed, always impressed me. And

all the while it was manifest that other interests and other pleasures were wholly subordinate in him to the Divine "ruling passion," the name and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

> Farewell, too little and too lately known,
> Whom I began to think and call my own.

I loved (let me rather say, I love) him well. Often, when tried somewhat in faith and hope amidst the "unfavourable events" of contemporary Christendom, the thought of his faith and love, his clear insight and high courage, has carried to me a peculiar message of good cheer. Now this must be foregone. Far behind me in earthly years, he is older now in immortality.

> How have they got beyond!
> Converted last, yet first with glory crown'd!
> Little once I thought that these
> Would first the summit gain,
> And leave me far below, slow journeying through the plain.

But let us turn from such regrets, to give thanks for the perpetual possession of a sacred memory, and of a blessed hope, and to look more directly than ever to the Archetype of all His saints, "of whom it is witnessed that He liveth."

IN LONDON

CHAPTER IX

In London

"To strike a blow for God against the growing heathenism of London is an ambition any man may rightly have."—*From a letter to his Sister.*

A MINISTER so eminently useful is soon coveted by other congregations, and before Mr. Macgregor had been long in Aberdeen he had many invitations to leave it. Churches in various parts of Scotland wished to know whether he would "consider" a call; and there were, besides, overtures from London and overtures from Melbourne. The mission tour in Canada, on which he accompanied Mr. Hubert Brooke and Mr. Inwood in the spring of 1893, produced two pressing invitations. One was from the St. James' Square Presbyterian Church, Toronto, a large and important congregation. It was accompanied by a memorial, which could not but touch him, from a number of ministers in that city, expressing their earnest hope that it might please God to send him to work in their midst. The other was from the Avenue Church, Chicago, so closely associated with Mr. Moody's work.

From Chicago, where their tour had taken them for a few days, he wrote to his wife on May 23rd, 1893 :—

I was greatly startled yesterday morning. Mr. Moody called me into his private room, and said to me, "How would you like to leave Scotland, and come over here to be minister of the Avenue Church and manager of the Institute? Go and pray over it, and see what the Lord's will is." The proposal was simply astounding to me, and I was deeply touched. I could not, however, think of such a thing.

A few days later he says :—

Mr. Moody has been talking to me again about coming here. He says the people are keen to get me, but I said to him I did not feel the least drawn to it. I am only afraid I may be choosing a life of ease rather than a life of pain. Still I do not think I am fitted for this post in the centre of a new world. The Lord will guide.

Some months later, when he doubtless thought the matter was at an end, it was brought up again by an earnest invitation from the congregation, supported by a letter from Mr. Torrey, the superintendent of the Institute, who, after speaking of the field as one of the most promising in the world, in view of the combined opportunity presented by Institute and church, wrote: "I do not know of any person on earth to-day that I would rather see pastor of that church than yourself."

All these invitations, however, were successively put aside. He was happy and useful in his Aberdeen work, and did not yet feel free to leave it. Still, it was evident that ere long it would be well for him to make some change. Such work as he was doing must tell upon the strongest man; he had flung himself into it, straight from college, and laboured without intermission since. In another congregation he would have a new start, and possibly work somewhat less engrossing and constant. He had now produced his impression on the life of the northern city, an impression of a definite and memorable kind; might it not be well that other scenes and other communities should come under his influence and witness his example?

In the autumn of 1893 he was first approached by representatives of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Notting Hill. The church is a spacious building in Kensington Park Road, erected for the Church of England, but purchased some thirty years ago by Mr. James E. Mathieson and other friends, who were anxious to have a Presbyterian Church in the west of London to which the late Dr. Adolph Saphir might come as minister. Their hope was realized, and the place will ever be associated with the sweet savour of Dr. Saphir's work and his sanctified genius as an expounder of Scripture. But somewhat delicate health and a shy, retiring disposition prevented that

remarkable man from building up a strong organized congregation, and after a few years he resigned. Under his successor the church had a chequered history—first some prosperous days, and then a sad decline. When the office-bearers addressed themselves to Mr. Macgregor the church was nearly empty, the membership less than two hundred. At first sight it seemed out of the question that the minister of a devoted congregation of over a thousand, with a perfect host of workers, every church agency flourishing, and so much encouragement and blessing, should think of leaving it for a church like this. But Mr. Macgregor did not look at it in this way. The very difficulties of the situation, the hard and anxious work which it presented, appealed to the chivalry of his nature. All the soldier in him, that burned to go to Aden when Keith-Falconer fell, was ready to undertake what appeared almost a forlorn hope. To England he felt a strong attraction. He felt he owed it a peculiar debt for the blessing and illumination he had himself received on English soil. He was well known at many conventions in England; he had numerous friends, especially in London; if he was to leave Aberdeen, there was no place that attracted him so much as the great metropolis. So he did not put the proposal away from him, yet neither did he hastily accept it. During the winter he proceeded calmly and steadily with his work as

usual. But he agreed to preach at Notting Hill in February. Step by step the way seemed to open up for his accepting the call. What weighed much with him in deciding was the strange atmosphere of prayer that seemed to surround the whole matter. "There are many earnest souls in the remnant here," one of the congregation had written to him, "who are crying to God that this extremity may be His opportunity." A veteran missionary to the Jews, the Rev. William Wingate, associated with those joyful early days of the Pesth mission when the whole Saphir family, including young Adolph, were brought to Christ—associated, too, with Dr. Saphir's labours in Notting Hill—wrote a letter full of prayerful wishes and hopes. Many Christian workers in London, unconnected with the Presbyterian Church, were also asking that so valiant a worker might be added to their number.

On the 1st of May, 1894, at the meeting of his Presbytery in Aberdeen, Mr. Macgregor accepted the call. The East Church congregation had behaved throughout in a beautiful Christian spirit. Grieved at heart, as they could not but be, at parting with the minister who under God had been the means of such blessing to them, when they found that, like St. Paul, he was led on by a clear impulse of duty, then, like St. Paul's friends, they said "The will of the Lord be done." The speech in which he

announced his decision was characteristically frank and straightforward. It showed the width of his outlook on all work for God; and it is striking to see how, after these years of successful labour at home, he still had visions of service abroad if God should open a door.

A man (he said) has only one life. I can honestly say that the point that has weighed with me is how I may best use my life and the powers God has given me for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. I have tried during my ministry to look at myself, not so much as a minister of the Free East Church or the Free Church, but rather as a servant of God, bound to do His work wherever He wishes me to do it—whether in Scotland, or England, or America, or, what is equally possible, in heathen lands, amongst those who have not yet heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. The place where a man works is, after all, of little consequence, provided he feels it is the place where he can best serve his Master's interests. . . . Since I came to Aberdeen God has graciously granted us a very considerable measure of blessing, and hitherto I have felt that I had no right to entertain any call—that I was not free to move, that the way was blocked. In this case I have not felt so. Some may think I am wrong, but the conviction has taken hold of me that I am not only free to move, but that it is my duty to move. I have been feeling that the increasing burden of pastoral work was almost heavier than I could carry, and feeling to some extent also that, having come fresh from college to take up the work of this congregation, the time I have had for reading has

been deplorably small, and there has been a considerable danger of my mind being impoverished and my whole work as a preacher entirely weakened. Another point of considerable strength is this, that perhaps I have delivered to my present congregation the special message that I was sent to deliver.

As to the question whether London is a sphere where I may reasonably hope to do work for God, I cannot shut my eyes to the difficulties of the situation. I know quite well it is a wrench to go from a congregation of a thousand to a congregation of two hundred, and to go from a church that is filled by a hearty and loving congregation to a church that is nearly three-quarters empty. It is a difficulty to go from a community that is almost entirely Presbyterian to a community where Presbyterians are few and far between, and to go from a church which is really a national church into a church which is not national. But it is the very difficulties of the situation that attract me. London has for years weighed heavily on my heart, and the need of London has pressed on my heart and conscience in a way I cannot very fully explain. It is largely because of that, because London is so full of wickedness and the field so unlimited, that I have felt it to be my duty—I can use no other word—to accept the call.

Next day he wrote to his sister:—

The wheel has taken another turn, and my path of life takes me to London. I can hardly believe the thing is done—that Aberdeen is past, and London about to begin. It will be a great change, but *when He putteth forth His*

sheep He goeth before them. We will follow, putting our trust in Him.

In a farewell letter to the flock he was leaving he said :—

I go to the city which is the centre of the whole world, to preach as faithfully as I can Christ and Him crucified. I know well I can hardly hope to be as happy there as I have been with you, or to have the same outward tokens of success to encourage me. I know I cannot look for as easy a life, or one as free from worry, as I have had here. But the path of ease is not always the path of duty, and that the path of duty leads me to London I feel very strongly. I confess that while considering the question of the call my heart was all for refusing it, and at times I felt as if it would need but little pressure to induce me to stay. But, as the days went on, the burden of London's need lay so heavy upon me, and the call to go became so clear, that I felt that for me to stay would be disobedience to the command of Him whom I wish always to follow as my Lord.

He was inducted at Notting Hill by the Presbytery of London North on May 24, 1894, and preached for the first time as minister of the church on Sunday, May 27. This was the beginning of the ministry which lasted for the remainder of his short life. Measured even by an outward and material standard, it was a prosperous ministry; wonderfully prosperous, in view of some of the difficulties which had to be contended with. There was not the rush of pros-

perity that there had been in Aberdeen. In this his own forecast was verified, and the circumstances of the case, indeed, did not admit of the repetition of his former experience. But from the first day the congregation steadily grew in numbers, in zeal, in activity, in liberality, and in everything else that marks congregational life. His work, however, lay not only in enlarging, but in deepening; and intensity even more than extension characterized its results. Numbers and financial returns are but imperfect indications of spiritual work. The true results are seen in living souls gathered into the kingdom, and in the stronger and more fruitful life of believers. The extraordinary development of the missionary interest in Notting Hill during these years was but one, though a very marked, effect of Mr. Macgregor's ministry. He was himself so on fire for the conversion of the world, his own heart so consecrated to missionary work in the widest sense, that the noble contagion was communicated to all who came near him. Seldom has one seen such a concert of believing and intense intercession for missions as in that congregation, and the visible results, both in gifts and in young men and women offering themselves for missionary service, were very marked. A list, containing seven names, of those who are now in the mission field—two in India, two in China, two in South Africa, and one in Palestine—speaks for itself;

but a far larger number who were connected with other congregations owed not a little to the stimulus of his example, and of his preaching, heard from time to time. He had always two monthly prayer meetings for missions, one at his week-night service, the other in connection with the Women's Missionary Association of the Church; and doubtless it was to this constant prayer that the remarkable missionary results in the congregation were due. Missionary work was constantly dwelt on in the pulpit, and the appeal made to those who might be in circumstances to respond to the call to labour in God's cause abroad was peculiarly solemn and searching. In no year of his ministry was response lacking. "His face used to beam," writes Mrs. Dunbar Walker, a lady specially associated with him in this work, "when I took any one to tell him they wished to give themselves for the foreign field. The people's interest in the subject was kept up by the simple, informal way in which, at our prayer meetings, he would invite the parents or other relatives of those who had gone abroad to tell us anything fresh or striking which our 'fellow-workers' had lately written home. We had missionary maps about the lecture hall, and, as you know, the photographs of our missionaries, so that we might all know our devoted representatives 'by face,' and in a special frame those who had gone out from our own congre-

gation. It all seemed to come so naturally, and without any apparent special effort; yet the people's hearts were so opened that sometimes it seemed as if they could not keep their money back! You know how freely many of them have given. I have never worked with any one so full of zeal about souls."

One instance of the liberality just referred to may be given. A maid-servant one day told him she was saving a small sum to give to missions. A few months afterwards, at the close of a service, she slipped an envelope into his hand as she passed out, saying, "Here is that money." Being engaged at the time, he merely thanked her, and did not open the packet until he got home. When he did so, he found that it contained £20. Of such noble generosity there were instances not a few.

Of some other departments of the work of these busy and blessed years Mr. James E. Mathieson writes :—

The prayer meeting on Sunday mornings for half an hour before the public service was a time much to be remembered. The minister never missed this opportunity of meeting with the group of people who found it possible to attend. One recalls his springy step as he came in, his joyful face as he gave out the hymn, or, between some of the prayers, started a chorus, such as "Let the Blessed Sunshine in," or "I Believe God Answers Prayer," or called upon his people to repeat texts which reflected their individual experiences. How these moments flew past; how

the brief, hearty little meeting tuned our hearts for the larger gathering in the house of God! and then, before entering the pulpit, he found a few moments for prayer with the members of the choir.

The writer during a long life has had many homes and has been favoured with much faithful ministry, but he had never looked forward to refreshing and instruction in the truth so much as in the five years during which he enjoyed the ministry of this young and faithful servant of Christ. George Macgregor never hesitated to give its rightful central place to the Cross of Christ, as displaying the pivot doctrine upon which our faith and our hopes hinge, and around which all other vital doctrines find their appropriate places; Christ's deity and incarnation, His resurrection and ascension, and the hope of His appearing, were prominent in his teaching.

On Sunday evenings, after giving out the text, he usually put out the gas behind him, addressing himself to his subject without the aid of notes, and looking straight into his people's faces. It suggested to me the thought of a workman taking off his coat as if he meant business—business for the Master, transactions with immortal souls, with whom he might never again have an opportunity for appeal or warning. He took the oversight, too, of open-air preaching in the street outside his church, and sometimes gave an address; nor did he manifest any exhaustion (whatever he may have felt), after his long day's services, in the evening hour, when he would sing a solo or offer the Word of life to those outside the fold.

But while labouring thus strenuously for his own congregation, he recognised that for a minister in

London there are other avenues of usefulness of which he may avail himself. These outside activities must indeed be carefully watched, lest they come to occupy too much time, but if wisely used they may be serviceable rather than otherwise for one's proper work. Mr. Macgregor once shrewdly remarked of a friend that he would never fill his church by merely remaining in it and preaching. A man ought to welcome all lawful opportunities of commending himself to a wider audience. Such opportunities George Macgregor never had to seek for; his difficulty was what to choose or accept out of the multitude of invitations that came to him. When he came to London, he was already well known as a prominent and acceptable speaker at Keswick. This ensured for him a cordial reception in all evangelical circles, and year by year, as he became better known, he was more warmly esteemed and loved. At Exeter Hall and at Mildmay he was always sure of a welcome. He was almost an ideal speaker on such occasions. His clear, resonant voice at once enabled every one to hear with perfect ease, and there is no reason to doubt the somewhat cynical remark of an eminent preacher that many persons, when they say they like one preacher better than another, merely mean that they hear him more distinctly and comfortably. But he not only spoke audibly and pleasantly, you might always be sure that he was thoroughly pre-

pared. He respected his audience; he took care to have something to say. I have already quoted the testimony of one with wide experience of meetings of every kind, and its tribute to the unfailingly high spiritual tone of Mr. Macgregor's addresses on such occasions. How often friends remarked that his address was the one, or at least among those, which gave the spiritual keynote to a whole meeting! One has known occasions, though rarely, for he was eminently a popular speaker, when he might be less successful than others on the platform in arresting attention or securing applause, but never one when his words came short, in gravity or weight or spiritual enthusiasm, of what the occasion demanded. Surely the explanation lay in this, that he never took part in such gatherings without very special prayer.

One instance may be given of the manner in which he took part in engagements of this kind. The first general conference of Young Women's Christian Associations was held in London on four days of June, 1898. The promoters of the gathering were deeply anxious that it should not be a time merely of reports and statistics and conferences about the machinery of their work, but a season of spiritual quickening for the delegates from so many different countries. Devotional meetings were arranged for, and a Bible reading to commence each day's work. But, with so much to get through in

each day, the Bible reading had to be given at ten o'clock in the morning, and with many of the delegates living in suburbs, often an hour's journey from the place of meeting, it seemed doubtful whether many would find it possible to attend. Mr. Macgregor gave four remarkable Bible readings on the Holy Spirit, an exposition of some of the passages from Scripture so beautifully arranged in his little book *The Things of the Spirit*, dealing with the Spirit's Personality, His names and titles, the manner of His dispensation, and the nature of His work. "Each day," says one who was present—the Hon. Emily Kinnaird—"the audience was larger, more punctual, more attentive, until the hall was full; and the addresses had a powerful influence on the spiritual tone of the conference, which all remarked was a characteristic of the gathering and an answer to prayer."

THE PASSION FOR SOULS

CHAPTER X

The Passion for Souls

"He that winneth souls is wise."—*Prov.* xi. 30.

THE scene so graphically depicted in the last chapter by Mr. Mathieson is one that lingers in many memories: the golden summer evening, the little crowd gathered outside the church in the "long, unlovely street," and the minister in the midst of his band of workers, rejoicing to tell once more, at the close of a long day's labour, the message of Divine love to the lost. He was a true soul winner, a man animated with a genuine passion to gain his fellows for Christ. To those who came to hear he gave, always and gladly, of his very best, and those who would not come he was ready to go forth and seek. The great Gospel command *Compel them to come in* is sometimes overlooked in our time. But obedience to it lay at the very roots of George Macgregor's ministry from first to last. We saw the passion burning in him, when he was little more than a boy, in that memorable year and a half at Ferintosh. All through

his Divinity studies the thought was uppermost, "This training is in order to enable me better to win men." And during those twelve brief years, which formed all the time given him for earthly ministry, it is safe to say that there was not one day when the great constraining motive did not present itself to his soul in all its solemnity, that he was sent as an ambassador to persuade men to be reconciled to God.

Moreover, it grew stronger and stronger as time went on. Perhaps this is not always so. There are no doubt different kinds of ministry, and to some it is given to instruct and edify believers, while others are called more specially to do the work of an evangelist. And sometimes the experience of guiding the saints on the Delectable Mountains may partly disincline one for the possibly harder and less encouraging work of appealing to the unconverted. Holiness conventions, it is said, are not always helpful to evangelistic effort. If there be any truth in this, it behoves us all to seek to remove the reproach. Of Keswick, at least, it cannot be so said; witness the extraordinary stimulus that Keswick has given, and will yet give, to all missionary effort. And few men could be found more profoundly possessed than George Macgregor, prominent and greatly honoured as he was in the effort after holiness, with the passion for saving souls.

This great end he pursued by every means open to

him—by preaching, by special missions, by letters, by personal dealing. In both these last ways God used him, for he was a man whom many found it easy to confide in. Many wrote to him of their spiritual difficulties, and his conversations with individuals were innumerable. He had not, however, quite that gift which seems to have belonged to McCheyne, and was possessed by Dr. Andrew Bonar in so eminent a degree, of entering easily and naturally into religious conversation with every one. His greatest power, after all, was in the pulpit. His splendid natural gifts as a speaker, his force, vitality, persuasiveness, found full scope here ; but above all was his supreme and overwhelming interest in his theme and conviction of its endless moment for every individual in his audience. He valued and encouraged special missions —few men of his years had to do with a larger number of these ; but he did not trust exclusively to them. He thought we ought to hear more of men and women being saved under the ordinary ministry of the Gospel, and his own work was directed accordingly.

So the open-air meetings were not an excursion aside from his ordinary ways of working. He was merely carrying to the audience outside the church building the same message and the same earnest persuasiveness that had just before been presented to the congregation within. His fine vocal powers were an immense assistance here.

To how many (says one) the remembrance of his voice, so quiet, yet always so clear and distinct, comes back as it used to ring through the open air, on the Sunday evenings when he stood outside his church to tell again "the old, old story" to the passers by, or to sing a well-known hymn as a solo. One hymn especially, No. 581 in Sankey's collection, some of us will never hear or sing without thinking of him as he sang it one night—

> Oh, what will you do with Jesus?
> The call comes low and sweet:

and then went from one to another with that special winsomeness of manner, mingled with loving earnestness, which so marked everything he did, and attracted to Him for Whom he sought to win men.

Never (says the same friend) shall I forget one of the last sermons Mr. Macgregor preached, on the healing of blind Bartimæus, nor the indescribable tenderness and power of persuasion with which, as he bent over the pulpit, he cried, with arms outstretched: "O Bartimæus, my brother, where are you? If I only knew where you are sitting, I would come down from the pulpit, and take you by the hand and bring you to Jesus! The Master is calling you: won't you come to Him, now, just as you are? He does not want to take you for what you ought to be. He wants you exactly as you are, to heal you of your sickness, to make you what you can never make yourself!"

To appeals like this—so solemn, so tender, so urgent—God granted many a response, and some of them strange enough. It happened one Sunday evening, not long before his first visit to Northfield, in the

summer of 1897, that at the last moment, under one of those strange, unaccountable impulses of which most preachers have had experience, he felt himself obliged to set aside the subject he had prepared to preach upon, and give instead a simple, direct presentation of God's pardoning love in Christ. He could not explain why he did this, but the reason soon appeared. That week he received a letter, terrible as anything in Victor Hugo, written as with blood and tears, the cry of an outraged and broken heart. A poor woman, the victim of man's cruelty and sin, in passing by had entered the church for a few minutes' rest, and there heard a message long forgotten, or judged incredible in the bitterness of despair. "I and another sufferer," said the writer, "have shed bitter, heart-wrung tears over this letter. It might not have been written, but hearing your sermon on Sunday night, and weeping over it, I have written this." It seemed that message had been given to the preacher, as if without his own will, in order to guide this poor lost one to the feet of the Saviour.

Such were opportunities that came to him in his ordinary ministry. But even these were not sufficient for his sacred ambition. He was full, brimming over, with energy and ardour to win men from sin to God. It was the thought of the awful needs of London, as we saw, that forced him in the end to accept the call to Notting Hill; and the longer he lived in London,

the more heavily did the burden of it weigh on his spirit. Mr. Mathieson and others intimately acquainted with his ministry have remarked how little, comparatively, in spite of this constant thought of the special sins and dangers of the day, he preached on what are called "present-day" questions. On these he could, indeed, and did speak to purpose when he thought fit. His temperance sermon, published as a booklet, with the title *Who Kindled the Fire?* is one of the boldest and most outspoken indictments of the entire drink system uttered in our time. But such utterances on his lips were comparatively rare. Deeply as he felt the evils of this age, still more deeply was he convinced that the great remedy for them lay in the Gospel. Like the saintly Archbishop Leighton, when some urged him to preach for the times, he would have answered that there were enough who did that, and that he preferred to preach for eternity.

The work of the Young Men's Christian Association peculiarly attracted him, and before he had been very long in London he found opportunity to help in it. The two great centres of the association in the metropolis afford an interesting variety of work. Aldersgate, in the heart of the city, is an open door for the vast multitudes of clerks, assistants in warehouses, and others in the immediate neighbourhood, a certain portion of whom live on the business premises. It has thus what may be called a residential constitu-

ency. Exeter Hall, again, situated in the great pleasure thoroughfare of London, with some thirty theatres and music halls within a radius of half a mile, offers nightly an opportunity for definitely aggressive work among young men, hardly to be equalled in the world. Every youth who comes to London wants to see the Strand, and have some idea of the life that goes on there. The picturesqueness and animation interest him, and he has no thought of the dangers that lie in wait for the unwary. All sorts and conditions—London-bred lads, and those from every part of the kingdom, colonials and foreigners, the innocent and the half-infected, the merely curious, the reckless, the tempters—all are mingled in the living stream which night after night pours along the street. A great opportunity for Christian workers, truly, but an opportunity requiring men of very special gifts to make right use of it. A "meeting" of the ordinary kind is the last thing these youths would think of entering. What they want is life, amusement, something spicy and entertaining, and effort on the old lines, however earnest, would leave them untouched. But in Mr. J. H. Putterill, the secretary, and his fellow-workers the committee has men equal to the occasion, men combining the needful earnestness, tact, good humour, and readiness of wit, men ready to stand any amount of "chaff" and some surly rebuffs if they can but induce, out of hundreds invited,

a score or two of young fellows to come in and have a talk.

Mr. Macgregor (says Mr. Putterill) was a first-rate man for our work. To get the ear of the audiences we have here—I am speaking of those we gather in of an evening off the Strand, not of the crowds in the big hall upstairs at the May meetings!—we want a man of special gifts. We asked him because he was a young man, because he was bright and strong, and because he was not conventional. We got him to come one spring, and give "Talks to Young Men" every Thursday night for several months. It was a great deal for him to give, busy as he was with all his church work, and so many other things. But he was intensely interested in the work, and I think enjoyed it more and more as he went on. We don't get great numbers to these meetings, as any one who knows the conditions will understand. We often think 100 not a bad meeting. The average would be 150 to 200 that season with Mr. Macgregor. His speaking was just the thing—straight, and brotherly, and downright. Then he managed so well to get an after-meeting. To try the ordinary kind of after-meeting with these young fellows would be hopeless; they would take the alarm at once! He would merely say at the end: "I have to wait for a bit in the parlour behind after this meeting, and if any one here would like a little more talk, or to ask any question about the things we have been speaking of, I am at your service." As many as ten, fifteen, twenty would stay. He would sit on the corner of the table and talk to them. If he saw one more specially interested, he would say to him quietly: "You just wait, dear chap, till

I'm done with the others, and then we shall be freer." I know that many thank God for these talks.

The next year, which was 1897, he gave us a week's mission for city young men at Aldersgate, and a very helpful mission it was. He has given us other assistance since, and especially last spring. His whole heart was in the work, and it was interesting to see how, when you asked him to do anything, he would first answer, "I fear it's not possible," and then after a minute or two, "I wonder whether we could not work it in somehow." I am sure he gave whatever was possible in this service, and he did it with all his heart.

It would be easy to accumulate testimony as to the blessing which in so many ways attended the missions which he conducted in every part of the country. But one or two must suffice. Here is a portion of a letter from a minister in the north of England:

I have kept silence for some weeks so that I might be able to judge, as from a little distance, the effect of the work of last February. The day of account alone will reveal the amount of blessing. I have taken up my work with new zest. Indeed, it is not so much that: the work is entirely transfigured. You have begotten in me, under God, a passion for souls that will not be denied. I have had more joy in my work during the past fortnight than ever before, and that in spite of the fact that I have had cause for worry and irritation beyond the average. This truth of "trusting always" is wonderful, and my people seem a different people, as indeed they are.

Into all this work he threw himself with that singular directness and unity of purpose which characterised his whole ministry. The entire weight of his life and personality was directed on one thing—to bring men to God. But while he thus lived and laboured for one thing, he himself, as has been shown, was no narrow or one-sided man. A tribute from Dr. Stalker sets forth in vivid and discriminating fashion the striking impression Mr. Macgregor produced in a mission in Glasgow in the beginning of 1893. The missioner, it must be remembered, was then only eight-and-twenty, and though the promise was very bright, the full attainment was not yet such as many have known in years since then.

Mr. Macgregor once conducted a week of meetings for me in St. Matthew's, Glasgow, and, though it happened more than seven years ago, my recollection of his visit is still vivid and pleasurable. His style suited my people, and they came out in unusually large numbers. There was no noise or excitement, but fresh, searching, Scriptural teaching. The meetings were brief, lasting not much more than an hour, but he gave two addresses each evening, one to Christians and the other to the undecided, with prayer and singing between. This afforded great variety, and enabled the speaker without effort to keep up the interest.

He stayed with us, and we found him very interesting in private. I still remember his sketches of Highland communion seasons, and the illustrations he gave of a

practice originated by himself and his brothers of talking among themselves in a language formed by spelling the words backwards. But what charmed me most was his scholarliness. The caressing way in which he handled his Greek Testament betrayed the student, and he had a truly theological mind, fitted to search into the deep things of the Scriptures and of the soul. He had just begun to identify himself with the Keswick movement; and, having myself attended the Convention and been deeply impressed with its possibilities, I urged him to make himself the theologian of the movement. I remember especially recommending to him the works on the Holy Spirit of Owen and Goodwin, and it was a gratification to me subsequently to hear from a friend of his that he had written out a very elaborate analysis of the former, which is a book so great and deep as almost by itself to be able to make a theologian.

When he had gone, he left the impression of a remarkable personality, who, with his Celtic brilliance and force of character, might exert a profound influence in a favourable environment such as the Keswick movement seemed to furnish. We talked of him for many a day, and followed his career with interest, though we smiled a little at what seemed to us a faint "sough" of perfectionism, which was not absent from his addresses or his conversation, as it, perhaps, clung at that time to the Keswick movement.

Dr. Stalker, it will be seen, refers to a faint suggestion of Perfectionist teaching which, at one time at least, some of Mr. Macgregor's words were apt to convey. It may be safely said that no man more

steadily and constantly rejected all idea of the possibility of attaining actual sinlessness in this life. He had but one phrase with which to characterise this from first to last. Writing from Pontresina in 1890, he says: "The year's Convention seems to have had several distinguishing marks. I am very much struck with the pains taken by the leaders to guard the movement from the fatal error of Perfectionism." In *A Holy Life*, published in 1894, the words occur (p. 76):[1] "New deliverance from conscious sinning will bring with it new consciousness of sin that lies below the sinning. Fellowship with the Holy Spirit will discover to us our own unholiness. It is necessary to emphasize this in order to show how far different the teaching of Scripture is from the fatal error of sinless perfection." But while he was thus strongly convinced that the notion of attained sinlessness by any man in this life is a delusion, and lost no opportunity (as many can testify) to warn his hearers against it, it cannot be denied that, both in his books and his addresses, language was sometimes used which might be misunderstood, and from which inferences, which he would strongly have repudiated, might be drawn by some.

The most widely circulated of all his books is that to which reference has just been made. *A Holy*

[1] The reference is to the 6*d.* edition.

Life, and How to Live It was published in August, 1894, and had passed through ten editions in this country at the time of the author's death. A penny edition has lately been issued by the publishers, with a contemplated issue of several hundred thousand. Not only has the circulation been thus large. None of his writings brought to Mr. Macgregor so many expressions of deepest thankfulness from readers in all parts of the world. A book which God has thus used must be regarded with a peculiar and tender interest. And a beautiful book it is, in its profound searching of the human heart, in its yearning after holiness and deeper fellowship with God, and in its insistence on simple faith and surrender to Christ as the great condition of sanctification. It abounds with piercing, memorable sentences. "Have you been shut up to Christ for holiness?" "Have you ceased to say, Can God? Have you learned to say, God can?"

Some readers may indeed question whether the striking use made, in the third chapter, of the cleansing of the leper is altogether justified. When Our Lord touched the leper, saying, "I will: be thou clean," the disease was instantly and completely banished. There can be no more vivid emblem of the immediate removal of guilt in the very moment we come to Jesus. Is this, however, all that the

miracle teaches? The author is undoubtedly right when he says, No; this is a story of *cleansing*. Yet his language regarding the nature and extent of the cleansing process is scarcely sufficiently guarded. "How is my temper to be broken, so that never, never again shall it be the source of pain that it has been?" "You may receive cleansing, as the leper did, instantly, and by a touch." "The work may be done thoroughly, and done at once." Such sentences as these suggest, if they do not teach, that complete sanctification, not only in principle but in every detail, may be accomplished at the moment when we surrender ourselves to Christ. This Mr. Macgregor himself did not for a moment believe, for it is contrary both to Scripture and to human experience. That the cleansing touch of Christ is able to break the power of sin as a principle in the heart is the blessed experience of thousands. But, though the power of evil is thus broken, the victory has yet to be carried out in detail, and there is far from being yet the condition of perfect rightness of nature, which is our ideal, and which would be the analogue of the leper's instant and perfect restoration. The cleansing, in short, was a momentary act; sanctification is a lifelong process. It is a process, moreover, in which, the more complete the saint's victory over express acts of evil, the more profound is his consciousness of his unsatisfactory state at the best,

in view of the absolute holiness of God and of our Perfect Example. This deeper fact is strongly brought out in the quotation made above (p. 176). The analogy of the leper's cleansing, then, which was instant and complete, is misleading if pressed too far, and may give rise to fallacious expectations which cannot, in point of fact, be realized. A similar remark applies to the use made, in the succeeding chapter of the book, of St. Peter's walking on the water, as teaching the secret of continuance. It is a beautiful thought that, while the eye is fixed on Christ, and self and the world forgotten, we may indeed walk on the troubled sea. But it is scarcely a fair use of Scripture to make the Apostle's walking on the water once a proof that we ought never to do anything else. It is carrying allegorical interpretation too far. Rest in the Lord, peace that passeth all understanding guarding heart and thought, these are scriptural accounts of what the new life is, and true. But these are not the same as walking on the water.

But why dwell on these small blemishes in the work of one so honoured and so dear? What, after all, do they amount to? Only that his words sometimes went a little farther than he fully realized; that he would sometimes make an illustration carry more than it ought to carry. Had the book, the outcome of his passionate yearning to save and bless

his brethren, been less widely disseminated, it would not have been needful thus to comment on it, and one gladly turns from the task. For noble and admirable as the book in its conception, and in by far the greater portion of its contents is, the man himself was better. Whether, had he lived, he would have become, when thought and experience were fully matured, the theologian of the Keswick movement, no one can tell. But in his brief life he had a higher honour still. He was a man consumed by the noblest ambition that can fill the breast of any human being, the ambition to bring his fellow-men to God; and when we look back over the life so spent, and now crowned with victory, we can but say,—

Thou hast given him his heart's desire.

PASTOR AND TEACHER

CHAPTER XI

Pastor and Teacher

THE chief aspect which his life presented during these later years was that of a man incessantly occupied with public engagements, and necessarily much away from home. Preaching or preparing to preach to large congregations in his own church, at Exeter Hall or Keswick addressing larger audiences still; taking part in one year in more than twenty conventions; thus his time was occupied. There are but twenty-four hours in the day, and if so much time and strength are given to work for large numbers, there is necessarily left much less for other duty—for self-culture and for the help of individuals. It was observed before, that many thought one so intensely busy could not possibly find time to read; a notion which we found to be a mistaken one. Not less were they in error who supposed that he could have little time for pastoral duty, and that while he was serving the Church at large, his own congregation must always suffer. It was, of course,

impossible that he could do as much for the latter as if his whole time had been spent among them. As a member of his church writes, "Congregations upon whom God is pleased to bestow a 'front-rank man' as pastor have sometimes to exercise forbearance when their minister is called out to wider ministry." And this forbearance was generously and lovingly given. If sometimes a good man would tell the minister, with a gentle shake of the head, that it was above a year since they had had a pastoral visit, or an invalid would sigh, now and again, for a word of cheer, and try to praise God that last week at Exeter, and this week both at Birmingham and Sunderland, many were giving thanks for the blessed message brought to them by her dear pastor, all was forgiven in a moment when at length he appeared. If the number of his visits was not great, the quality atoned for them,—so bright, and so clearly and intensely spiritual. "A Christian invalid remarked" —I quote again from one of his attached office-bearers—"that she would rather miss repeated calls from another than go without the quarterly visit which her minister paid to her." What struck many in the course of these visits was the evidence afforded that, whether they spoke with him often or not, his people were never out of his thoughts. "Always in every prayer of mine making request for you all" was his daily habit, and indifferent ones sometimes

realized with a kind of awe how he was daily pleading for their souls at the throne of God.

A special feature in his ministry (says another office-bearer in the church) was Mr. Macgregor's sermons at the time of Communion, not always directly bearing upon the ordinance, but intertwined and woven with it as a beautiful background, and making Our Saviour visibly stand out as the Great Succourer, ready to give relief, no matter what the kind of need. His preparation classes also formed an important part of his work. He held these almost every quarter, alternately in the church and in the hall, at the close of service on Sunday evening, when old members were also invited to stay. He went over the sacraments most carefully, explaining and urging our individual responsibility. Perhaps the most direct awakenings were in connection with some of these preparation classes.

The tenderness of his love to Christ (writes Mr. J. E. Mathieson), and to "the sheep of His pasture," came out very beautifully at the Communion table; he loved to see his people's faces shine with holy, chastened joy on such occasions, as we sang the praise of Him Who died, and realized the nearness of our Lord through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and sought His prevailing intercessions for deeper knowledge of His Will and more obedience of faith. Strong, tender, and true was this beloved, greatly lamented, and much missed pastor, and though the Master of the House has many other faithful servants available for His work, we may not expect to see another cast in this same mould, at once attractive in his personality, authoritative in his teaching, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Thus, in the midst of the flock over which the Lord had set him, did he "allure to brighter worlds and lead the way." If his many labours abridged his time for seeking and visiting his people in their own homes, he was never too busy to be wholly at their disposal when they sought him, and on Sundays, and at the close of every service, he often spent almost as much time in personal conversation as in public addresses. More than one has spoken of the time after service, when he used to pass from pew to pew in the church, so brightly, patiently, and tenderly giving to each the word of guidance or encouragement or consolation for which they waited. To some who had been brought up under a ministry of a different kind, all this presented an absolutely new conception of the pastoral office, with its responsibilities and its sacred ties; and one writes that with all reverence it may be said that the blessed words, *The Lord is my Shepherd*, seemed to have a deeper and grander meaning than ever, when one had seen so lofty an embodiment of the work of an under-shepherd.

An interesting part of his pastoral labour, and one which ought not to be overlooked, was discharged by correspondence. It has not been found possible to embody in this memoir more than a small number out of the great mass of letters which he wrote in the course of his twelve years' ministry. The reason is,

he was emphatically a man of business, and the business of his King and Master required haste. With a strong impression that his life could not be a very long one, and with innumerable calls to work on every hand, he had no time to pour out the leisurely, delightful, heart-revealing letters which formed one of the charms of an earlier generation. What he wrote, apart from home and family letters, were little more than brief business notes. And, indeed, when he wrote at greater length, as he sometimes did, it was business also, the sacred business of his ministry; answers to letters asking guidance, explanations of passages in his books, or portions of the Keswick teaching. One or two of these have, happily, been placed at our disposal, though others are of too personal a nature to be so made use of. Very precious to their recipients were some brief, rapidly-written notes, containing, perhaps, little more than a text of Scripture or a sweet verse of a hymn, but reminding a soul in doubt or trouble that the pastor was not forgetful of his or her case, and lightening the load by the sense that prayer was ascending for the needed strength. Thus he wrote to a young lady in the Post Office, severely taxed by the long hours and special strain of the days immediately before Christmas.

December 23, 1896.

DEAR MISS ——,

I find you laid upon my heart in connection with your heavy work this week. I have been praying for you that you may be kept in perfect peace. "The peace of God *shall* keep your heart."

> Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
> Never foe can follow, never traitor stand.
> Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
> *Not a blast of hurry*, touch the spirit there.
> Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest;
> Finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you, all this week, and evermore.

Your affectionate minister,

GEORGE H. C. MACGREGOR.

Of recent years probably few of those connected with the Keswick movement were more consulted than he by persons in spiritual difficulties. The insight and clearness which both his speaking and his writings showed, seemed to direct inquirers for further light naturally to turn to him. Others consulted him, as we shall see, regarding foreign missionary work. Where might they find the fittest opening? Ought they to consider themselves free to accept such a call? If they might look forward to going abroad one day, how ought they meanwhile to study and endeavour to qualify themselves? Scores of letters came to him with questions such as these. Others wrote from a condition of intellectual doubt

or bewilderment, some really sceptical, others with perplexities comparatively easy to deal with and remove. For all of these he seems to have been able to find some answer, and the letters of gratitude, though fewer of them have been preserved, are not less striking than those of searching enquiry. Here is a good example of his manner of dealing with a soul difficulty. It shows his quick insight, how he could "strike his finger on the place, and say, Thou ailest here, and here."

February 3, 1898.

Many thanks for your letter of 29th ult., which it was a joy to receive. Perhaps what is hindering you from the joy and the steadiness of spiritual experience for which you long is that you are more taken up with your consecration to God, than with God's acceptance of your consecration. Remember that when you yield, He takes. The matter passes out of your hands into His. You are His for ever. Rest on that, believe it, dwell on the thought of *His* faithfulness, His power to keep, and that will bring you where you wish to be.

May the Lord fill you with His Spirit, and use you to be a blessing to others.

Yours in best bonds,

GEORGE H. C. MACGREGOR.

The next letter is one which was referred to on an earlier page. It possesses considerable autobiographical interest. The frankness with which, for the help of another, he opens up a long-closed chapter of

his intellectual and spiritual history is characteristic, and not less so is the boldness with which some of his positions are stated. It is eminently a letter calculated to stimulate thought, and its strong conviction, its brotherly tone, and the peculiar ease with which it handles great questions, give it a singular charm. If the enquirer was confessedly in some mental entanglement and confusion, here was a guide wholly to one's mind, at once sympathetic, competent, absolutely convinced of the truth, and absolutely straightforward in its defence. One passage there is in the letter which some might shrink from writing. But his native Calvinism had taught George Macgregor to set no bounds to the majestic truth of the absolute sovereignty of God. He gloried in the assertion of it, that God might be all in all. And if the letter did not, at the time, remove every difficulty, but still called forth from his correspondent some expressions of dissent, it is now a peculiarly treasured possession, both for the writer's sake, and because it helped towards a calmer and surer faith in after days.

ROSE COTTAGE, BRAEMAR,
ABERDEENSHIRE,
September 18, 1897.

DEAR ——,

I am glad that you have written me, and written me so frankly about your difficulties, and the "tangle" in

which you find yourself. To put these things down in black and white often is a help, even though we get no answer to our questions. I have great diffidence in dealing with difficulties, like yours, in writing. It is only by question and answer that they can properly be handled. However, I hope I may be able to say something that may help.

In regard to the general attitude of your mind to these questions I feel inclined to say two things :—

1. Remember always the relative positions of faith and knowledge. All knowledge is based on faith. We take for granted things which we cannot prove ere we can know anything. Take, for instance, our knowledge of the world round us, derived from our senses. That is based on the supposition that our senses are not misleading us. As you know, the actual existence of a world outside us cannot be proved. To accept as a working hypothesis for life something which we cannot prove is not necessarily an irrational act. It may be the truest wisdom.

2. Remember that at present we are in the infancy of our being, and that to complain that we cannot understand things, or to expect that we should understand things, is as foolish as for a child of three years old to expect to understand the working of the differential and integral calculus. The mysteries of the Christian faith, therefore, are no evidence that it is not Divine. If it be what it claims to be, there must be things in it which await explanation in the future.

You ask me about my faith in Scripture as the Word of God. I was trained up in the strictest possible way to believe in the inspiration of the Bible. But the faith that was the result of this training utterly gave way, and for a

time I lost all faith in the Bible as inspired. I became an utter sceptic. But amid all my scepticism and doubt there was one thing that I could not doubt. That was that I was not what I ought to be. I was a sinner. Sin was a fact in my life. It was the discovery of this *as a fact* that led me back to the Bible. I found it dealt with sin as no other book did, and understood sin as no other book did. Other books spoke of evil, vice, crime; this of sin. I began to see that the inspiration of the Bible did not lie so much in its being a miraculously accurate book, as in its being a book written from God's point of view. I found that the same point of view was kept all through the books written at such different times and by such different men. The whole book was about God. As I said, it was "sin" that brought me back to the Bible, but I found hundreds of things converging to confirm my growing conviction that the book was of God. Our Lord Jesus became a reality to me. He accepted the Old Testament as the Word of God. He became a witness to it for me. As I have become more familiar with the Bible, the conviction has grown that God has had His way all through in connection with this book. Our difficulties almost all arise either from ignorance or misunderstanding.

A valuable subsidiary evidence is the effect that the Bible has on those who accept it. The history of our Bible Societies, and a knowledge of what they are doing, furnishes an answer to many a difficulty. If the Bible be not inspired, to explain its influence and power is impossible; if it be, all is plain.

Your difficulty about "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated," is the old difficulty about "Election" and

"Divine Sovereignty," and is of course a very difficult one to deal with. I know no way out of this difficulty except by remembering that God is Love, and that the Will of God, *whatever it be*, is the best for the Universe. We must remember, too, that *as against God none of us has any rights whatever.* This is exceedingly humbling to us who have such a singular idea of our own importance. "As the clay in the hands of the potter, so are we in His hands." Only remember that the gulf between clay and potter is infinitely *less* than the gulf between us and God. The one is the gulf between two creatures: the other between creature and Creator. A saner view of our own importance makes the doctrine of Election more reasonable, and a firmer faith in the character of God as Love makes it one of the most hopeful and cheerful doctrines of our religion. Surely, it is an awful blasphemy to think that men will be worse off when their fate depends on the Will of God than when it depends on anything in themselves.

In regard to the doctrine of eternal punishment, I think we give ourselves unnecessary pain:

1. By forgetting that in the Bible this is spoken of only in connection with definitive unbelief.

2. By thinking of it as if it were the act of God revengefully torturing His creatures. This last is a horrid blasphemy. In connection with this truly awful subject there are two things we must remember:

(1) That few, if any of us, have any adequate conception of the utter and absolute damnableness of *sin.* The most awful effect of sin on our souls has been to make us think lightly of sin. If we saw sin as God sees it, we would not wonder at what is said of the punishment due to it.

Remember that the Bible is consistent with itself. To save from sin, according to it, demanded the Incarnation —the Cross.

(2) That we are apt to forget the tendency of character to get fixed. How long will a branch which has grown crooked take to grow straight? Everlasting crookedness is the penalty of growing crooked. If a man is living in sin, and deliberately refuses Him Who alone can save from sin, there is nothing else for it but that he remain under the power of sin.

In regard to the doctrine of the Atonement, I think my best plan is to refer you to Dr. Dale's book on the subject, or to the chapter on the subject in Dr. Denney's *Studies in Theology*.

I do not know that what I have written will be of any use, but I send it for what it is worth.

As to what you should do, it is very difficult to say more than what I said at Keswick. Do not be discouraged by all this turmoil and trouble of mind. Out of it all God will bring you to a faith all the stronger and clearer because of it. *Be true to what you know.* Put it into practice. Live as like Jesus Christ as you possibly can. And remember He lives to help you to live like Him. And as you walk, light will break on you. I shall often pray for you, and shall be glad to hear from you, and if you are in London to see you. I return thither in ten days.

With kindest regards,

Yours very truly,

GEORGE H. C. MACGREGOR.

The apostolic maxim, "Give heed to teaching,"

was one which he specially laid to heart and obeyed. With some of the gifts of an orator to sway men's feelings, and much of the evangelist's power of compelling the will, he was, perhaps, greatest of all in the simple lucid statement of truth. It was often remarked that, while no addresses were more easily followed than his, because thought and language alike were so perfectly clear, none required more thinking over afterwards, if the full benefit was to be reaped. The amount of matter contained in his addresses was remarkable. Not that he ever professed to be what is called an original thinker. He used frankly to tell his audiences the sources which many of his best things came from, and bid them go and search for more for themselves. The little book *Praying in the Holy Ghost*, for instance, is stated in the preface to be based on Owen. To that great writer, and others of the chief Puritan divines, he was never weary of expressing his debt, and his study of them gave a peculiar fulness and body to his speaking and preaching, as well as a certain old-world flavour which was singularly attractive. Not that either the matter or the phrasing was in any way other than intensely alive. He was no echo, but a living voice.

In Bible readings he peculiarly excelled. To be able to give a good Bible reading is one of

the rarest gifts. It requires a wide knowledge at once of Scripture, of theology, and of human life, and all in due proportion. If any one of these elements is in excess, the result suffers. Thus, if too many texts are brought in, the hearer is apt to be bewildered; if there is too much doctrine he is fatigued; if too much or too lively practical application, he may be more entertained than profited. But there are those, and Mr. Macgregor was one, who know how to observe the just measure. He had a scholar's training in the Bible and in Christian doctrine; both were to him his daily food; and he had also a full and varied acquaintance with the soul's needs. His preference lay, on the whole, in the direction of topical rather than textual exposition. He had a strong sense of the greatness of divine truth, and the mental as well as spiritual enlargement resulting from the study of it, and he knew the danger of the textual reading of Scripture degenerating, if unskilfully used, into verbal trivialities and fanciful or arbitrary interpretations. That to which he introduced his hearers was genuine Biblical theology. The four addresses on the Bible doctrine of the Holy Spirit, at the Young Women's Christian Association Conference, were a typical example of his method and the effect then produced, by God's blessing, abundantly justified it.

In these studies his own wide knowledge, though evident, was never paraded, nor were his own views dogmatically insisted on. He rather sought to bring forward the evidence as he understood it, and let his hearers form their own conclusions. In expounding the Old Testament, he seldom referred to the work of modern criticism. It was not necessary to do so, for the work he was doing was not affected by it. But from his college days he had been familiar with the methods of modern Bible study, and the conclusions which many devout and sober-minded scholars have arrived at, and he was far from regarding these with the distrust or aversion which are sometimes seen. We have seen his affectionate and cordial tribute to the work and memory of Dr. Robertson Smith. He warns there, as he always did, against criticism which is not pursued in a reverent and deeply believing spirit. He thought that critics had been sometimes rash and premature in their judgments, and would join good-naturedly in the laugh at some critical extravagance. But he remained all his days Professor Davidson's pupil. In all these matters the minister of Notting Hill stood precisely where the New College Hebrew tutor had stood. "We had only once," writes Professor George Adam Smith of him, "a long talk together on serious matters. It was after he became connected with Keswick, and I was struck with the fact that he talked with the greatest sympathy and

approval of modern Biblical criticism. He seemed to have read a good deal on the modern lines, and to accept not only the legitimacy of the critical methods, but a number of the results. Of course, I cannot say how far he went." I remember how he would deprecate the needless unsettling of people's minds, recognising how certain terms, innocent enough in themselves, at once excited suspicion of a lurking danger. Thus, in the pulpit he would never use the word criticism, but would rather speak of Bible study. His last address, to Christian Endeavourers at the City Temple, contained a defence of the sober and reverent criticism which, while testing all things, holds fast that which is good.

It is matter of regret to those who knew him that he has left so little written. For, bright and useful as all his little books are, there is nothing which gives an adequate impression of his powers. One and all, however, are admirable in their own kind as examples of devotional writing, earnest, tender, and wise. *The Aspirations of the Christian* is rich in spiritual suggestion. How much, for instance, such a sentence as this gives one to think of: "God usually guides by whispers, and those who would be guided by Him must keep near Him" (p. 85). There is the explanation why many so seldom hear the Divine Voice at all. *Gospel Glimpses*, also, appears to me a very model in its own way. These studies in St. Mark are

very brief, only ten or eleven pages on the average, and some might call them slight. They make no pretension to expound the story. They merely select a number of salient points, singling out in each of them one definite truth or lesson, pressing that home with great freshness and point, and stopping there. It would be difficult to find better examples of homiletic restraint. In subjects such as Our Lord's baptism, bristling with topics for exposition and application, the skill in selecting one thought, and the reserve which for the present declines to take up anything else, are very noteworthy. It is the art of driving one nail at a time. And the lessons themselves are so fresh and striking, by no means the first which present themselves on the surface. "Why, he is reading Keswick into the first chapters of St. Mark!" said one. And why not? If the truths of God's Holy Spirit and the life of faith were not in these chapters, the Gospel of St. Mark would be another gospel than that we know.

His intellectual lucidity and grasp specially fitted him to be an exponent of Keswick teaching to those who came with some prejudice or doubt in their minds. If his intense earnestness could not fail to impress, his reasonableness and ability conciliated and convinced. In some remarkable instances, where men of very different theological schools came to Keswick, it was found that among all the speakers

the young Scotsman was the one who had most strongly interested and impressed them. But one of the most interesting tributes to his service in the cause which he had so much at heart was that of a well-known and devoted worker in a foreign country. It was his first visit to Keswick, and at first the tone and atmosphere appeared a little strange. He remarked to a friend that he felt as if the speakers meant nothing very different from what he knew and accepted, but there was some impalpable difference; it was, he said, as if they were all playing, they and he, in the same orchestra, but his instrument was not quite in tune with the rest. That evening George Macgregor was the principal speaker, and his convincing and beautiful exposition swept the stranger's difficulties all away. "It's all right now," he said to his friend, as they left the tent together; "Macgregor has tuned me!"

AMERICAN JOURNEYS

CHAPTER XII

American Journeys

TOWARDS the close of 1892, the Committee of the Keswick Convention were urged to send a deputy or deputies to Canada, to make known to the Christian public in the chief cities of the Dominion what Keswick teaching meant. In Canada, as elsewhere, a measure of prejudice had existed in former years, arising, no doubt, from the unguarded expressions which belong to the earlier stages of every great movement, and which, in this case, appeared to imply the teaching of perfection. But some prominent Canadians, who had themselves been at Keswick and received blessing, came home to dispel these misunderstandings. They were now, however, anxious to have them dissipated in the most authoritative way by an actual visit from some of the recognised heads of the movement. This, it was earnestly hoped, would not only remove all wrong impressions, but bring blessing to all the churches of Canada.

The suggestion and invitation were cordially received. Very gladly would the committee see their work thus extended in other fields; but was it practicable, could they get men to go? The first man asked was the Rev. Hubert Brooke. However attractive the proposal, in ordinary circumstances it would have been impossible for him to accept it. But at this particular juncture it happened that he was recovering from illness, and in need of a change; and so far from prohibiting, his medical man declared that a Canadian trip would be the very thing to set him up. After a little correspondence it was found that both Mr. Inwood and Mr. Macgregor could accompany Mr. Brooke, and it was arranged accordingly. The party, Mrs. Brooke accompanying her husband, sailed from Liverpool in the *Majestic*, on the 5th of April, 1893, and spent two months on their mission.

It was a singular thing that the three men thus associated had hitherto hardly known each other. Mr. Brooke had never heard either of his colleagues speak. Mr. Macgregor's first appearance on the Keswick platform had been only the previous summer, and then Mr. Brooke happened to be absent. Mr. Inwood was in a similar position. But the committee who selected them knew all three, and had been guided to a singularly happy choice. In nearly every respect the three missioners were the complements of one another. Not only did they stand, as

regards nationality, for the three kingdoms, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and in church connection for Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Methodism—the three churches which hold throughout Canada so commanding a position; but their gifts, also, in their diversity formed a remarkable combination for united work. A friend who crossed with them in the *Majestic*, happened to tell the story of a negro preacher who once announced to his audience: "First, breddren, I'se give de expounderin'; next, we'se have de argufication; and lastly, we'se come to de arousement"! There was a shout of laughter at the story, but the three fellow-workers at once caught it up as describing their own scheme for work. Mr. Brooke, with his remarkable gift in Bible readings, was to pave the way with the "expounderin'." Mr. Macgregor, probably the most theological of the three, would undertake the "argufication," the statement and defence of theological positions. And, finally, to Mr. Inwood would fall, mainly, the business of "arousement," pressing home the great truths they taught for heart and conscience, and seeking to bring their hearers to decision.

The programme and division of time was simple. A week was given to each of a number of towns. There was disappointment in every case that they must leave after so short a time, but the time was sufficient for their special purpose, which was not to conduct a

mission in each place (though they would gladly have done so if it had been possible); but to state briefly, for the instruction and strengthening of believers, what they held to be of faith on the great theme of holiness. The voyage was a somewhat stormy one, but Mr. Macgregor enjoyed it, as he always did. From New York, where they landed they went direct to Northfield, addressing the young men and women of Mr. Moody's Institutes, in the course of their visit of a couple of days. Montreal had the first complete week; then Toronto; next Guelph, Hamilton, Lockport (four days only); lastly Chicago, the one city in the States where they worked. There the three spent the usual week, working together; but Mr. Brooke, who during the tour had once or twice had brief returns of illness, remained longer, and addressed a number of meetings after his colleagues had left for home.

Of this brief and happy united ministry none of the fellow-labourers seem to have preserved much written record, but it made a very deep impression upon them all, and its memory is a very sunny and bright one with those who remain. What George Macgregor felt is expressed in a letter to his wife.

This trip has been to myself a time of great blessing. I would not have missed it for the world. That to me who am less than the least of all saints this grace should be given, to be at the initiation of this great spiritual move-

ment in Canada, fills me with the deepest wonder and gratitude.

Their experiences, no doubt, were mingled. In one or two places they found that their visit had been placarded as a visit of "The Keswick Brethren," and that some good people were at a loss to know whether they belonged to some new section of the Plymouth Brethren. This difficulty was soon got over. At Toronto they were happy in meeting at the outset a large gathering of ministers, not fewer than two hundred. It was all-important to secure the confidence and the hearty co-operation of such a band of God's servants. At the beginning, however, there was manifest, though in no unkindly way, a certain distrust. What was it that these brethren were bringing? Was it anything of "another gospel," or was it all contained in the Old Book? Did they teach sinless perfection, or what was their doctrine? After prayer the deputies successively made their statements. Their humility, their brotherliness, their wisdom, and the power given to them, were manifest to all. They brought no new doctrine, no new commandment, but that which the church has had from the beginning; only they desired to bring the working and power of the mighty Spirit of God into greater prominence, and to summon believers to claim the Lord Jesus as made of God unto them sanctification as well as redemption. The

distrust melted away. With full hearts the ministers joined in thankful and believing prayer, and the meeting broke up after singing "Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow." A week of real blessing followed.

In another city the experience was different. The meetings were largely attended, the people seemed intelligent and well trained in divine things; yet there was a strange chill and unresponsiveness, night after night. Each of the missioners was conscious of it, though none could explain what it was. On the closing night one of them plainly told the congregation that there was something in them, something about the place, which was keeping back the blessing. Many thanked him afterwards for this faithful rebuke. For it was true. Some things came out which showed how both in the churches of the town and in the Young Men's Christian Association living religion was at a very low ebb. Doubtless it is different now, but, as matters then were, the apathy with which the appeal to live a holier life was received that week was easily explained.

In 1897 Mr. Macgregor accepted an invitation from Mr. Moody to take part in the Northfield Conference of that year. Mr. Campbell Morgan was to be the other speaker from England. Mr. Macgregor and he were strangers to each other, and both felt it would seem odd if two ministers from London were

to meet for the first time on a platform in America. Mr. Morgan gives a characteristic account of their meeting.

We felt that we ought to meet, and know something at any rate of each other's position before going—for prior to that time we had never met. This seemed the more necessary as we had both been led to understand by friends that we represented two schools of thought on the great subject of the believer's sanctification. Alas! that such things should be! We met in my house, and talked the matter over, certainly for not more than a couple of hours. We parted feeling that each had found a new friend and comrade in service. We met next on the ground at Northfield.

Mr. Macgregor's journal of this interesting mission is unusually full and detailed, and the story is therefore best given in his own words. He started from Keswick, along with Dr. and Mrs. Pierson, at the close of the Convention week, on Saturday, July 24, 1897, and sailed from Liverpool in the *Lucania* the same afternoon. They had a pleasant passage, and much interesting converse by the way, reaching New York in good time the following Friday.

Saturday, July 31, 1897.—It is interesting to be in this great country again. We travelled to-day by the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railway to Springfield, and thence up the valley of the Connecticut river to South Vernon. Here a large number got out for Northfield.

I was met by Mr. William Moody, D. L. Moody's eldest son, who drove me to Northfield. The place is an earthly paradise, and is at present looking its loveliest. The view from the house where I am staying is simply perfect. I was driven to Mrs. Fitt's (Mr. Moody's daughter Emma).

At four Mr. Moody came down to see me, and we drove off together, taking Mr. Campbell Morgan, who was going to Boston, to the station, and driving round the principal buildings. After tea came the first meeting I went to, on a spot called the Round Top.[1] This is like Friar's Crag at Keswick, in that the meetings held on it are very informal.

For the first day or two, as in all his missions, as well as in his writings, Mr. Macgregor gave himself to the effort to deepen in his hearers the sense of sin and need. He was not sure whether this was acceptable teaching, but he felt it needful, and thankfully notes—"Mr. Moody was much moved and pleased, and begged me to keep on that line for a time."

Tuesday, August 3.—This morning's meeting, the beginning of the serious work of the Convention. Mr. Morgan spoke first on Malachi—a most marvellous address: he speaks with immense power. I followed on "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully." God is working in the people's hearts.

[1] It is on Round Top, as the reader will remember, that the stranger now visits Mr. Moody's grave.

Wednesday, *August* 4.—A most beautiful day, and very warm. A nice speakers' Prayer Meeting at 9.30. Then to the Auditorium. I spoke on Isaiah i. 25, on the cleansing power of God. Morgan followed with a wonderful talk on Matthew v. 48, "Be ye perfect." The impression was very, very deep. It was the most solemn meeting of the Convention so far. Many were utterly broken down before God.

In the afternoon at 3 we had a solemn memorial service for Hugh Beaver and Professor Henry Drummond. At 4, on Round Top, Dr. Erdmann answered questions. At 6.30 we had David, the Tamil Christian; and at 7.30 Professor English. Then we went to Mr. Moody's, where I told them about Bishop Taylor Smith's work. Mr. Moody has been profoundly moved by the meetings of the morning.

Thursday, *August* 5.—During the night we had a great rain-storm, yet by 10 in the morning all was bright. Many more people present: every train brings new people just now. Morgan spoke first on "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John v. 6), and I followed on "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean" (Matt. viii. 2). The people are much impressed by the agreement of our messages. There was a deep impression, and it is so blessedly evident that God is at work. In the afternoon Mr. Moody gave a splendid address on the Bible. The nearer one comes to Moody, the more one is impressed by him. He is a giant: the greatest religious force in America to-day.

Friday, *August* 6.—We began at 8.45 with a ministers' meeting. Morgan and I gave our experiences, telling simply what the Lord had done with us. The effect very

marked. The ministers had met for questions, but after the experiences had been told one got up and said that he did not think any questions should be asked. They all cried "Amen," and the meeting closed. At the morning meeting I spoke on "Kept rejoicing," Morgan on "Health." We then went to dinner at Dr. Pierson's. Afternoon spent largely in personal dealing.

After a hasty run to Boston, where, as Mr. Morgan had done a week before, he preached on the Sunday in Tremont Temple, Mr. Macgregor continues:—

Tuesday, August 10.—The audience larger than it has yet been, and the interest decidedly deeper. I spoke on "Kept safe in His life," and Morgan followed by a most remarkable address on "Fellowship." Many were helped. In the evening Dr. Grattan Guinness. He has never been in America before, and it is so pleasant to get his impressions of things. He spoke splendidly, and brought us very near to God. We are filled with wonder at the way God is leading us all here.

Thus, day after day, the blessing continued. The closing scene was on the following Sunday evening.

Sunday Evening, August 15.—This was our last Conference meeting, and a most remarkable one. Mr. Moody was conducting the meeting, and spoke of the marvellous blessing received. Then, without a word of warning to us, he said, "Would it not be a good thing if our two brethren could come to us next year? It would be so much easier

working the Conference than doing it with new men." The response was overwhelming. The entire audience rose to its feet, and remained standing, and would not be seated until Morgan and I had said that we should regard the invitation so given in the gravest possible light, and come back unless it were quite clear to us that we should not. The demonstration of feeling toward us has been extraordinary. The people have taken us to their very hearts. A very solemn after-meeting. Both of us, however, have felt that the strain of the Conference has been telling on the people, and that their power of hearing has almost been exhausted. It is, on the whole, well that the time is over. There will now be time to digest what has been received.

After Northfield the friends parted company, and Mr. Macgregor travelled westward to Winona Park, in Minnesota, a charming summer resort, where a Convention had been arranged, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. The numbers attending it were not very large, some 800, but of these 100 or 120 were ministers. Here, again, there was a time of much quickening and joy. Returning by Chicago, he notes the various sights of that wonderful city, and the interesting experience he enjoyed with the young men and women of Mr. Moody's Bible Institute, over which he had been invited in 1893 to preside.

At Winona Park he gives a graphic picture of a characteristic and interesting scene. In the morning an excellent address had been given by Dr. Paterson

on "How to Study the Bible," and a solemn address on Isaiah i. 25 by Mr. Macgregor.

After dinner we went to the Y.M.C.A. Camp to be present at a flag-raising. This was a most interesting and thoroughly American ceremony. A camp for Y.M.C.A. men has been formed, and this was a sort of dedication of it. Dr. Chapman made a little speech. Then they sang, "My country, 'tis of thee"—their National Anthem. Then the "stars and stripes" was raised, amid tremendous cheers. After it was up, I was called upon to speak, and got a great welcome. When I was done, out of courtesy to me they sang a verse of "God save the Queen," and gave three cheers for the Union Jack!

Both Mr. Macgregor and Mr. Morgan were able to accept the invitation to return to Northfield in 1898, which had been given with such warmth, and in the opinion of both the work of that second season was even deeper and more remarkable than the first. They seemed to take up the work just where they had left off, and continue as if there had been no interval of a year. It was this second year that Mr. Macgregor gave the address on the bored ear (Exod. xxi. 5, 6), which was perhaps attended with more direct and manifest blessing than any other address of his in either year. In general character, however, the second Conference was, naturally, very like the first, and the lively sketches contributed by Dr. Teunis

Hamlin to the American *Sunday School Times* might equally apply to either.

Mr. Macgregor (Dr. Hamlin says) is quite tall, slender, erect, with a fine, scholarly face, and an extremely earnest manner. He has a little of the "holy[1] tone," though at its best his voice is very sweet and persuasive. He has a trick of incessantly adjusting his cuffs, which is rather distracting. But he deals honestly with both his subject and his audience. He tries to create only genuine impressions, and never factitious emotions. He is perhaps too much given to saying parenthetically, "Oh, this truth is so wonderful!" or, "Oh, this passes belief!" or the like; yet such things are never said of commonplaces, as is the wont of weak men, but only of the greatest utterances of revelation. While intensely impressive, he is seldom passionate, though few that heard it will ever forget his warning against thinking that the richest blessing can be obtained only at this or that place, or from this or that minister. "It is not Northfield we want, but the God of Northfield"; and then, in ringing tones, "Oh, cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils!" Every sermon of Mr. Macgregor reveals the cultured theologian, the profound student of the Bible, the simple-hearted Christian, and the ardent lover of the Lord Jesus.

Of both speakers Dr. Hamlin says:—

Their preaching has been almost exclusively to Christians. They began with sin in the believer's life—sin

[1] Nothing but his pleasant Highland accent. There was not a trace of sanctimoniousness.

unconfessed, unrecognised, or consciously cherished—and dealt with it with mercilessly searching power. They held forth Jesus, not only as the Saviour from the penalty and guilt of sin, but from its dominion in the daily life; as able, not only to save by His death, but to keep safe in His life all those that commit themselves fully to Him, or, in Mr. Morgan's favourite phrase, "abandon themselves" to Him. And then, with wonderful knowledge of the Scriptures, especially of the Gospels and the Epistles, they set forth the richness and satisfying fulness of a life of faith. Control over temper and tongue, freedom from worry and fretfulness, uninterrupted peace and overflowing joy, superiority to circumstances, they described with alluring beauty, not as things to be attained by the believer's exertions, but to be accepted from the gracious Redeemer. Jesus Christ is thus the beginning and middle and end of the preaching of these two men of God.

* * * * *

They have taken pains to warn all hearers not to go away assuming that they are holier than others, and proudly attempting, when they reach home, to set every one about them right. They have urged that the life surrendered to Christ is essentially a humble life, from which "boasting is excluded," because one is so deeply conscious of having nothing that he has not received.

Some passages from the beautiful tribute which Mr. Campbell Morgan paid to his comrade in the *Life of Faith* for May 9, 1900, may conclude this chapter.

It is difficult to write to-day of those delightful days when people so hopelessly mixed us up as to go to him for explanations of what he meant in his address on such a subject, when it was I who had given that address, or come to me to know if I really meant so-and-so, which not I, but he, had said! We lived together, and read together, and prayed together, and spoke together, and, whatever his feeling, I feel that one of the most delightful comradeships of a lifetime had been entered upon.

He was a great, joyous soul, simply exulting in the actual experiences of which he spoke to the assemblies. For him indeed the life in Christ was the realization of all the powers of his being. His interest in the affairs of men everywhere was keen and agile. A true saint, moving with warm, generous heart amid the living realities of a busy age, sympathetic with the tenderness of a woman towards all the oppressed and downtrodden, loving the sinner with a great love, yet with a possibility of passion which his consecration had turned into wrath against all forms of sin and insincerity. His sense of humour and satire was keen. It found its proper place in his conversation and preaching. Never forced, it never degraded the high calling to which he was dedicated. It played on his subject, rather, like the summer lightning, clearing the atmosphere and harming none.

The greatest characteristic and greatest strength of his public ministry was his love for and acquaintance with his Bible. How he loved its mines of wealth, and with what skill he delved therein and brought out a constantly fresh supply of "things new and old"!

Then how generous he was to those from whom he differed! Of this I had practical experience once. It was

during our second year at Northfield (1898). In one of his addresses he gave forcible expression to a dogmatic statement of doctrine from which I differed wholly. When we reached our place of sojourn, I "went for" him. For hours we talked the matter out, with our Bibles in our hands. The subject was one of the old controversial centres of theology. Of course neither of us was convinced at the last, but after a time of silence he looked up at me and said, with that generous, sincere smile of his: "I never knew before how much might be said for your view." Then I was almost persuaded he was altogether right!

That year we journeyed home together in the good ship *Umbria*. How delightful the memory of those days amid the deeps! One evening we sat and watched the sun sink to rest behind horizon clouds. It was a combination of form and colour not to be pictured with the pen. He looked upon it with the glad wonder of a child delighting in the prodigality with which the Father flings a picture in the west for the feeding of the sense of beauty in His children, even though it can last but for a brief hour. Turning to me, he said: "What a blessed thing that God takes us through a change of enlarged possibility as we go home! I feel as though this glory were almost unbearable. What will heaven be?" To-day he knows.

IN THE MISSIONARY CAUSE

CHAPTER XIII

In the Missionary Cause

THIS man, the reader has long since remarked, was a born missionary. He lived as one bearing a message, a man sent of God. He had a deep sense also of the oneness of God's work in whatever part of the world it is carried on, and he held himself at God's disposal for service anywhere. The distinction between Home and Foreign Missions, though natural and convenient, may sometimes lead us almost to forget that it is the same work, only with difference of place and conditions. With George Macgregor the thought was never absent: "I have tried to look at myself merely as a servant of God, bound to do His work wherever He wishes me to do it, whether in Scotland or England or America, or, what is equally possible, in heathen lands amongst those who have not yet heard the Gospel. The place where a man works is after all of little consequence." That he was not himself in the foreign field might almost be called an accident. His first call came from there; but though his heart responded to the

call, the way was barred. Into the work that God gave him at home he threw himself with full purpose and joy. There was no "longing, lingering look behind"; no word or feeling as though he had to be content with the second best. Yet all the while the needs of other lands and other peoples had a peculiar place in his heart. You could always see how, had the way been open, he would have made these first.

So he made his ministry one of the best examples of what those who themselves remain at home may do to further the foreign missionary cause. In the first place, as he could not go himself, he tried to get others to go. It was a line of action which he was fond of recommending to those who found themselves too old, or not strong enough to go, or who were prevented by home or other ties. His own influence in this way undoubtedly led a considerable number to give themselves. He had first aimed at finding seven such "substitutes for personal service," and when this was attained, then seven more. An ambition like this knows no limit of numbers.

Associated as he thus was with applicants for missionary service, he was frequently consulted by those who had begun to cherish that sacred ambition. Many of his letters are written in answer to enquiries on this subject. His sympathy, his own strong devotion, and his sanctified common-sense come out in a remarkable way in these. He was always an admir-

able guide to persons who found themselves in any perplexity, because he would not evade a difficulty of any kind. He insisted on the real issue being faced at once; temporizing, or what is called letting people down gently, which is often a mere refusal to look facts in the face, was absolutely repugnant to him. Many he counselled, therefore, to abide in the place where they were called, to find their mission at home, and aid the conversion of the nations not by personal service, but by gifts and prayer. To those whose way seemed open to go abroad he gave most helpful advice. And, most of all, his own experience as a student, and since then as a minister, enabled him to give special aid and sympathy in the disappointment of those who seemed first bidden go and then found their way barred.

The letters that follow are selected from a number. The first is addressed to a young lady who enquired what she had best read in order to prepare herself for an expected call to the mission field.

11, Hanover Terrace,
Notting Hill, W.,
May 17, 1898.

Dear Miss ——,

Your question about private study is too big a question to be rightly answered in a letter.

If you want to study, I would advise you to get a book on theology, like Dr. Moule's *Outlines of Theology*. It is

simple, but comprehensive, and it is a book which can be trusted. Do not hurry over it, but study it carefully. Along with it, you might take a book like Dr. Whyte's *Commentary on the Shorter Catechism* (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh), which is a remarkable compendium of doctrine such as the missionary is called to impart. That book can be studied to great advantage for one's own spiritual life.

Along with this doctrinal study it would be well to combine study of one of the books of the Bible. Take the Epistle to the Romans. Dr. Moule has a splendid commentary on this in the *Expositor's Bible.* To master that book is to have an immense enrichment of one's knowledge. Then the Epistle to the Ephesians should be taken up, or the Epistle to the Hebrews. The work done should be thorough. Do not hurry with it. Besides this, you should do a lot of work with your concordance. If you have not got a good concordance, you should aim at getting one as soon as possible. The best to get is Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance.* It is an expensive work, but money spent on a good concordance is well invested. If you have Cruden, it will serve well, but Strong is better. Having got your concordance, go to work to see all that the Bible has to say about Sacrifice, or the Blood, or Service. This will give you a hold of your Bible, which is the great thing all workers for God have to aim at. More than this I cannot say at present.

Yours very truly,
G. H. C. MACGREGOR.

But the happy prospect of thus serving in other lands was not to be realized, and the letters that

follow show with what wisdom and emphasis his counsel was given. First, let the servant wait until the Master's will is fully declared, but be as ready and content, if His will should be so, to have this service refused as to have it accepted. When He refuses us our own wish, does He not give what is really better for us? And He recognises the willingness to offer. "Thou didst well that it was in Thine heart."

11, HANOVER TERRACE, W.,
November 25, 1898

DEAR MISS ——,

In this difficulty which you have about being willing not to go to the foreign field, and being able even to rejoice in being kept at home if that be the will of God, I think there is one thing that you forget. The only place where the true Christian can be happy is where the Master is. But if God does not wish you to go to the foreign field, and you went, He would not be with you. Your desire to go would then be a desire to get away from God. And that is not a desire that you really can have. Remember, too, that there is no field foreign to God. To be where He is must be our desire, and that will be where He places us. You must not allow the devil to worry you about this matter. It is probable that the Lord will give you the desire of your heart in this matter. Meantime seek for grace to rest in the Lord.

Yours in great haste,
G. H. C. MACGREGOR.

11, Hanover Terrace,
January 5, 1899.

I am sorry to hear that your hope of serving the Master in the foreign field has been crushed. It means that you are to be a missionary worker and helper instead of a missionary. Begin to work at once to get at least seven out in your place. Do not fret that you cannot go. Accept it as God's will, and let your desire for the blessing of the heathen lead you to work for them at home. Remember what I once said to you. You want to be with God. *But God is where His will for you is.*

Yours very truly,
George H. C. Macgregor.

Here again are letters to one for whom the way was open, and who is now in the English Presbyterian Church's Mission at Amoy.

7, Thornhill Gardens,
Sunderland,
February 10, 1898.

My dear Miss Usher,

I have just heard from my wife that on Tuesday at the committee you were formally accepted for our work in China. I am *very* glad, and since I have heard it I have been praying for you that you may be in a special way filled with the Spirit of God. I want to write you this that you may know I do not forget about you. I want for you as a missionary nothing short of the best God gives to His children. May He fill you with a passion for the souls of men, begotten in you by the compassion of Christ.

I hope that this new step forward will mean to you new blessing.

We are having wonderful meetings here. God has dispelled our fears and is working with great power.

With kindest regards,

Yours very truly,

GEORGE H. C. MACGREGOR.

December 16, 1898.

This letter is far too late to reach you for Christmas, but it will show you that when I was writing other Christmas letters you were not forgotten. Indeed you may be quite sure you will not be forgotten. We have pledged to keep you remembered in the Christian Endeavour, and I do not think there is a week when you are not prayed for.

By this time you will have reached your new home, and will be getting settled down. It must, I am sure, seem very strange. I often wish that I had gone through it, that I might know how missionaries feel when they reach the land in which they are to work. I am sure there must have been a little homesickness as you neared China, but the sense of being one of His witnesses would also be very strong. I do trust that you will always enjoy the sense of the Divine presence in your work.

I know that there is a great deal in work in heathen lands to draw one away from God. But there must be much to drive one back on God. I remember Mr. Gibson, of Swatow, saying to me that the sense of one's own powerlessness as one faced a Chinese audience made the Spirit of God a great reality. He said he never felt the presence of the Spirit so mighty as in the presence of the heathen.

I do not suppose it is needful to give you the Church

news. This you get from the Christian Endeavourers. . . .

Now I must stop. This is merely to wish you every blessing that a loving Father can bestow on you. We shall be always praying for you, that you may make rapid progress with the language, and be soon ready for the work of making known the Gospel to those around you.

With every good wish,

Yours very truly,

GEORGE H. C. MACGREGOR.

Both in Aberdeen and London the missionary givings of Mr. Macgregor's congregations were greatly increased under his ministry. "He roused the congregation," says Mr. Ogilvie, of the East Church, "to a much warmer interest, and soon succeeded in doubling their contributions to the foreign field." At Notting Hill the sums contributed, by rich and poor alike, were still more remarkable, and in the month of Mr. Macgregor's death the freewill offerings, for the Women's and Jewish Mission only, amounted to no less than £500. But of greater importance than the mere sums contributed was the kindling of interest in the divine enterprise of missions, and the awakening of the spirit of prayer.

The method on which Mr. Macgregor worked for this all-important end is set forth in a tiny penny booklet which he published in 1898, entitled, *The Supreme Need in Mission Work: a Solemn Message to the Church of Christ.* It was issued as one of their

booklets by the South Africa General Mission, of which Mr. Arthur Mercer, Wimbledon, is the Secretary, and some thousands of copies have been circulated. But it ought to be disseminated far more widely, for, well as he has done many things, he never did anything better than these few small pages, and the thoughts and considerations which he addresses ought to be pondered by every Christian heart.

With his usual directness he goes to his point at once.

Throughout the whole missionary world there is at present a very deep sense of need. . . . From every mission land the cry of the missionaries comes to our ears. And what do they cry for? Not men, not money, but *prayer*. Even above the urgent cry, "Come over and help us," and God knows they have enough reason to utter that cry, we hear the words, "Brethren, pray for us."

In this deepened sense of the need of prayer, which is noticeable on every side, we have a token that the Church is entering into full sympathy with her Lord. For the Lord has all along told us that the supreme need of missionary work is prayer. In His first utterance on the subject He made this plain. "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted, and were scattered about as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore." Before "Go," before "Give," comes "Pray." This is the Divine order, and any attempt to alter it will

end in disaster. Prayer is to missionary work what air is to the body—the element in which it lives. Missions were born in prayer, and can only live in the atmosphere of prayer. *The very first duty of a Church in organizing its foreign missionary work is to awaken, maintain, and sustain in its members the spirit of prayer.*

The *Reasons why Prayer should be Pre-eminent* and *the Character of the Prayer Needed* are the two topics which are briefly expounded. Prayer must be put foremost, especially for this reason, that it puts God first, and keeps men constantly in mind that this is His work, and only theirs as His instruments. How true is this remark of every form of church work nowadays, with the organization and machinery necessary, and the danger of sometimes losing sight of the spiritual purpose of it all: "The carrying on of a mission involves so many business details that unless the Church is simply full of prayer men will be tempted to forget God, and will try to do God's work in their own way." Again, "in the evangelization of the world, the missionary prayer meeting is a greater force than the missionary public meeting." As he said in another connection, it is always more important to get the ear of God for man than to get the ear of man for God. On the kind of prayer needed, the author speaks with his usual pungency. He sets down first that prayer must be intelligent and based on knowledge. "Many pray for missions

whose prayers are practically valueless because of their ignorance." If praying and working are really to co-operate, then the man who prays at home must at least know what the man out in the mission field is doing. The knowledge needed is twofold. It must be knowledge of missionary principles, that is, knowledge of what God wishes to be done; and knowledge of missionary facts, that is, of what God is actually doing. And this intelligent praying must also be definite, and intense; a veritable labouring in prayer.

No subject, during the last years of his life, was more intensely on Mr. Macgregor's heart than this. He wrote and spoke of it very frequently. To his venerable friend, the Rev. David Paton, he writes in May, 1898: "I send you a copy of a little booklet that I have published calling attention to the pre-eminence of prayer in the matter of missions. I feel that everything for the success of this work turns upon the prayerfulness of the Church that is carrying on the work. I think you will agree with the thought of the little book." During his last mission in Edinburgh, "he spoke to me," writes Dr Wilson, "of believing that he had important service to do for the Church in the department of Foreign Missions. He thought it had been made too much a matter of money, and making appeals to the people for funds. He would, in the first instance, leave that out of sight, and rather

press home to Christian people the responsibility of caring for a perishing world, awakening and enlightening their consciences, increasing their knowledge, and so their interest, and, especially, calling them to prayer."

The same considerations he brought before the synod of his own Church, the Presbyterian Church of England, at its meeting at Liverpool in April, 1898. The interesting Foreign Missions of that Church, in China, Formosa, and Upper Bengal, associated with William Burns and other honoured names, were faced by a necessity for enlargement. The committee of direction were anxious for a new departure. Mr. Macgregor gave an address which made a strong impression, urging, as is done in the little booklet, the paramount necessity of prayer. His proposal was that certain men should be set apart to devote a specified amount of time during the next twelve months to visiting the congregations of the Church, setting before them very earnestly the needs of the heathen world, and beseeching them to come, by prayer and effort, to the help of the Lord. As always, he was fearful lest this should be looked upon as a mere whipping-up of subscriptions, and he pleaded that the deputies should, so far as possible, not so much as mention money. Overwhelmed as he was with other work, he yet willingly consented, at the request of the Foreign Mission committee, to

be himself one of this unique deputation—men sent forth to ask, not for a larger missionary revenue, but for an increased concert of prayer. With him were associated such men as the Rev. William Watson, of Birkenhead, the Rev. J. G. Train, of Norwood, and the Rev. Alexander Gregory, himself sometime a missionary at Amoy, besides several devout and like-minded elders. Some fruit of their labour appeared forthwith, and some is appearing still.

It was in his own church, too, that he specially laboured in connection with that other cause, which for many possesses a certain sacred interest above any other form of missionary work, the Mission to the Jews. His interest in this cause was early awakened, and doubtless was increased when, as a student, he was associated with Dr. J. H. Wilson, who for many years has been a leader in the Jewish missions of the Free Church of Scotland. But it was not till he came to London that he was brought into personal relation with the work. The Church to which he ministered there had been the Church of Adolph Saphir. There, Sunday by Sunday, until very near the end of his long pilgrimage, might be seen in his place the venerable form of the Rev William Wingate. Other and not less warm friends of Israel surrounded him, and through some of these he was brought into actual contact with the extensive work among Jews in the east of London. A year

before his death he had been appointed joint-convener of the Jewish Mission of his Church, and with characteristic energy he threw himself into the task of reviving and deepening the Church's interest in it. Here, as in the case of Foreign Missions, he insisted on the importance of securing a living interest, and especially prayer, before any appeal was made for money. He addressed a brotherly and solemn request to every minister of the Church, begging him to preach a special sermon on the matter on the day appointed for the Jewish collection. Amid the pressure of so many other duties, he found time to go down and take part in the work of Mr. Polan, the Presbyterian Church's missionary in Whitechapel. He induced some of his devoted lady workers to give aid in ministering to the Hebrew women, and even to study the strange Yiddish tongue in order that their usefulness might be increased. Towards the close of last winter he had the great happiness of baptizing a convert of the Mission in his church at Notting Hill.

Joyfully greeting this as a firstfruits of new work, he was pressing forward, full of plans and projects for the future, when suddenly he was not, for God took him. During his last illness it was affectingly shown how deeply the cause of God's ancient people was in his heart. "His thoughts and prayers," says his physician, "as far as we could make them out,

seemed all to be for his beloved people, *and the Jews*."

But while thus giving of his best in time and strength to those missions of his own Church, which he felt had the strongest claim upon him, he was never limited or denominational in his sympathies. He was warmly interested in the work of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, and took part both in the Liverpool Conference of 1896, and the London Conference of 1900. He was president for a year of the Young Christians' Missionary Union, when his wide knowledge of missions, his business habits, and, above all, his splendid enthusiasm, were of the greatest service, and helped to stir up many. A brief letter which he addressed to the members in May, 1899, may close this chapter. It puts, in his terse memorable way, some thoughts that lay at the root of his life.

THE MESSAGE OF THE MONTH.

To the Members of the Unions.

'I am a debtor," said the great Apostle, "to the Greeks and to the barbarians, . . . so as much as in me is I am ready to preach the gospel." Here Paul reminds us of the duty that lies upon us to make the Gospel known to those who have it not. In receiving the Gospel, we have also received the command to make it known. By being receivers we have become debtors. We receive the Gospel not for ourselves alone, but for others. We are stewards, trustees; therefore a woe rests on us if we preach it not.

The measure of our obligation to take part in the great missionary campaign is the measure of the blessing we have received through the Gospel. To whom much is given, of him shall much be required. The fact that we in England owe everything we possess to the Gospel is what makes the obligation resting on us so strict. And this obligation we can discharge, this debt we can pay, only in two ways. We can pay it either by personal service, or by personal sacrifice that others may serve. We must either preach the Gospel to the heathen ourselves, or we must give time and strength, and thought and money, that others may be sent to preach. Paul paid his debt in both these ways. Let me ask you, dear friends, How are you going to pay yours? Is it to be in the way of personal service in the field? How many of you to whom this message will come have already laid your lives at the Master's feet for this purpose? Or is it to be in the way of personal sacrifice? In whatever way it be, see that it be "*In as much as in you is.*" Then in the day of the harvest yours will be a glad reward.

Yours in best bonds,

G. H. C. MACGREGOR.

BELOVED, YIELD THY TIME TO GOD

CHAPTER XIV

Beloved, yield thy Time to God

"Nicht nach der Ruhe sehne ich mich, aber nach der Stille."—*Richard Rothe.*

THE spectacle of constant and unremitting labour which these London years afford is an impressive one. Every minister in a great city is forced to work hard, but those who had seen many hard workers confessed that they had hardly known one like him. He seemed to do the work of several men at once. His pastorate would have been sufficient of itself for most men; but in his case there was added the host of conventions and other meetings which he attended in London and all over the country: his authorship, for, though he produced no large book, his small books and numerous sermons and addresses were no inconsiderable contribution from a ministry so brief: and, in the last years especially, the time and labour expended in the missionary cause. Many of his friends felt that he undertook too much, and frankly told him so.

Whether he was justified in continuing as he did, despite such remonstrance, is a question which must be asked and answered presently. It was certain that he did it all with his whole heart, and with the delight of a strong man rejoicing to run a race. Moreover, he seemed to thrive through it all, and his vigour to increase with the demands upon it.

One cannot but regard his splendid industry as an example for many of us his brother ministers. Many of us, though forced by the pressure of duty to work hard, are really indolent, and work accordingly by fits and starts, alternating activity and semi-idling, excusing the idle intervals on the plea that they are the necessary reaction following after hard work. A witty speaker once said that instead of the often feigned humility which laments "my leanness, my leanness!" it would be more candid if some would exclaim, "my laziness, my laziness!" Others, fully enough occupied, are not skilful to choose the right kind of work, and resign themselves to a kind of busy trifling, suffering their time to be frittered away and wasted in a multitude of petty engagements. From both of these weaknesses, which lay wait for many excellent ministers, George Macgregor was singularly free. We have seen him from the beginning of his college course, ever the strenuous and earnest student. *Qualis ab incepto.* Incessant industry, and that industry ever well directed and

profitably applied, had become the very law of his being.

He was a singularly rapid worker, and no doubt produced much of his work with an enviable ease. But he did not presume upon this gift, as some men gifted as he was may be tempted to do. Although he could do a great deal in a short time, he did not therefore content himself with short hours. His nature was, indeed, a curious blending of gifts generally associated with entirely different types. With his Celtic fire and dash he combined a patience and a power of dogged persistence that seem rather to belong to the most phlegmatic Anglo-Saxon type. He was in the habit of working as many hours as if, instead of being an unusually swift worker, he had been an exceptionally slow one. Unite such quickness as his with such untiring and unremitting industry, and there are hardly any limits to what a man may do.

This, no doubt, explains much, but even after one has noted and made full allowance for it, the output of those years is still very striking. How did he do it? His great strength and fine constitution were a splendid foundation. Then there was that peculiar energy with which he was endowed, a kind of *igneus vigor* that bore him along and swept obstacles out of his way. With most men, after working for a certain

time, the mind loses its edge, an indication that it is time for a change of occupation, and for something less taxing. His mind was unusually keen and untiring, and seemed scarcely to feel this. But, more than almost anything, he was aided by his remarkable habits of method and order. His was emphatically a businesslike mind, and he had a businesslike way of doing everything. He acted throughout on the Duke of Wellington's famous rule, to aim at always doing the day's work within the day. This punctuality, and having one's work well in hand, is the secret of avoiding arrears. George Macgregor's work was always ready to time, and every detail in order. His business capacity showed itself not only in the study, but in the committee-room or in any sort of consultation. "As a chairman," writes a warm admirer, "he was splendid! Keen, businesslike, clear-headed, with a firm hold on the reins and a good grasp of the situation, it was exhilarating to be near him."

Like all men possessed of this peculiar grip and mastery of details, he had a great power of utilizing the odd moments. Thus he had no lost time. Many of the brief intervals that come in each day's work he made use of for prayer. But when opportunity served, he knew how to combine praying and working. His long railway journeys to every part of England were carefully turned to account. On

these his Greek Testament was his great companion, and much of his remarkable familiarity with the original text of the New Testament was due to these long and frequently solitary journeys. Yet he was no recluse who was unhappy if he could not be alone with his books. On the contrary, he was the brightest of companions, and ever ready to lay aside his own occupation in order to make a long journey pleasant and interesting to his fellow-travellers. This he would do not less readily for a young stranger, but just introduced to him, than for an old friend. A young South African lady, now with God, who received great blessing at Keswick, used to speak as if the blessing began on the journey from London, when she travelled with Mr. Macgregor.

What was the secret of a life so intense and yet so easy? The explanation was simple. He had consecrated himself and all that he had to God. His time was God's, and hence alike the unsparing industry with which he improved every moment when he was left to himself, and the cordial, ungrudging way in which he would lay aside his own plan and put his precious time to an entirely different use if it would help another. A man's dealing with interruptions is often a practical test of his religion. To one of student habits any inroad on the hours of study is trying, especially if the calls or interruptions are of a trivial kind. A stern nature, with a deep

sense of responsibility, and jealous for the right improvement of every moment, may be very intolerant of anything that seems to filch any of his Master's time. But George Macgregor regarded the matter from a higher point of view still. He had yielded up his time, with everything else that he had, to God. The best way in which his days and hours could be used was God's way. For this use of it he made his own plans in the first place, and was prepared to carry them out if nothing prevented it. But how could he tell whether any of those knocks at his study door might not bring a call from God to some better employment; and if the errand of his visitor should prove to be of no great consequence, might it not be sent for the trying of his patience, or that he might give the stranger a word of cheer? Therefore he was not ruffled or disturbed. Pressed as he was with an often well-nigh overwhelming burden of work, and time all too short to do it, he was unfailingly patient, courteous, calm. That little study at 11, Hanover Terrace, has witnessed many a remarkable interview. Doubters have been guided, and anxious hearts comforted, and enquirers brought to the Saviour, in that room. But there was no more impressive witness of Christ given there than was given often to those who only came for a few minutes on business. The secret which St. Paul had learned, that well-balanced life

that can deal with matters of every kind and from every quarter in the same Christian temper, was possessed by George Macgregor in a remarkable degree. When one looked at him, so overwhelmingly busy, yet never overwhelmed or even so much as upset, taking all calmly, with a smile and a kind word for every one, as well as the strong, helping hand whenever it was in his power to give that, one seemed to see the living embodiment of Rothe's noble saying—"It is not rest I long for, but calm."

His wife writes:—

I have been thinking over little details in his life which show how wonderfully he lived out all he preached. He never got a cheque, however small, without at once marking down the tenth of it in his charity book to be given away. Then he never was worried about anything. He just seemed to cast all his cares on his Saviour, and nothing ever seemed to ruffle his calm. However busy he was, he was never put out if interruptions came. Often, when I used to complain of people paying him long visits in the study, when I knew he could ill spare the time, he would only smile, and say he was thankful if he could give them any spiritual help. When he came home tired he used to go to the organ, and sit down and play and sing hymns, which he said rested him more than anything. The last Sunday night before his illness, I remember so well his sitting down and singing that lovely hymn, "Sleep on, beloved!" right through. It was the last time I heard him sing. Strange that he should have chosen that!

Of the fine freedom with which he could throw the burden quite off him, an instance is furnished by a friend. It was a few days before he sailed for America to attend the Northfield Conference of 1897. He was busy with the collection and arranging of passages of Scripture on the subject of the Holy Ghost, afterwards published. It was a work of considerable labour, carried through with his customary thoroughness, and it was being completed in the midst of all his preparations both for Keswick and Northfield, as well as for his absence for the summer. The task was not quite finished, and finding how he was occupied, his friend apologised for disturbing him. "Not at all," he said ; "you must stay and have tea with us," and, laying aside his papers, he led the way to the little London garden, with its pleasant shade on the burning July afternoon ; and for a couple of hours he talked and played with his children, and told old Highland stories and funny incidents of his former visits to America—"all," said his friend, "as if he had not a care of any sort." And, indeed, it was so ; he had not a care. His cares were all put from him in his full surrender of all to Christ. The completeness of that surrender made the fulness of his enjoyment of life.

His life history has been told to little purpose if it has not revealed his great capacity for friendship. His was a truly hospitable nature, ever ready to

welcome congenial spirits and take them to his heart. This natural longing had been intensified by circumstances in his early life. "He had gone to live in lodgings," says his college friend, the Rev. John Kelman, "while very young, and had led a life with much loneliness in it, which his exceptionally warm heart felt keenly. He often spoke of this, and to any offer of Christian friendship his whole being responded with hungry eagerness. The friendships he formed were whole-hearted." To the end of his life, as many can testify, all this, though no longer with the same cause for "hungry eagerness," remained true. A further remark of Mr. Kelman's, as to the powerful influence which George Macgregor's personality exercised on his friends, can equally be confirmed by many others. "It is almost incredible to me," he says, "that we were together, as class-fellows, in that peculiar relation of intimacy, only from November to February of one year. His vivid personality laid hold on one's imagination as well as one's affection; and an acquaintanceship of three months seems, now that one looks back upon it, an almost lifelong friendship." Such was he to his friends, and thus wholeheartedly did he enter into his friendships. Yet so strong a nature could not but be at times somewhat solitary. And, indeed, with all his friendliness and his keen enjoyment of life, there was a certain reserve about him in some of his relations to life and to men.

That which was remarked of Henry Drummond was true of him also in some measure, that, constantly as he gave help to others, he rarely seemed, in later life, to ask or even need help from them. This was not merely independence of character. It was rather a kind of spiritual detachment. In many things, indeed, he could be frank almost to the point of unreserve. But the deepest was a region to which he could not have admitted you if he would.

He had a considerable power of the soft answer, but his remarks and comments on men and things were not only shrewd, but often showed a good deal of quiet sarcasm. "I find —— a little oppressed by the sense of what a famous man he is now," he wrote of one. His note upon a windy orator was, perhaps unconsciously, very like Abraham Lincoln's : "the kind of thing for those who like that kind of thing." Once, when he was staying with a friend, some neighbours whom he found far from congenial dropped in to spend the evening. They remained very late, sang, and were somewhat noisy. George, who was quite young at the time, slipped out of the room, and at last was heard overhead playing and singing sacred music. All listened, hushed, to the clear, penetrating voice. The words were, "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing." It is not said whether the hint was immediately taken.

Thus, in clear determinate surrender of life and all

things to his Heavenly Master, he ran his brief and devoted career. So short that career was, and so full of life and promise he ever seemed, it is impossible not to ask the question, Need it, then, have been so short? did not that intensity of devotion cut him off before his time? It is a natural enough question, but those who really knew him have no difficulty as to the answer. It is true we often expostulated, and begged him to spare himself. Especially after his youngest sister's death, in March, 1898, friends urged it as a duty which he owed to himself and to his Master, that he should lessen the number of his engagements and not spend himself so prodigally. He admitted the force of this, and to a certain extent tried to follow the advice. One or two slight breakdowns accentuated it. "I have collapsed, and am not to be allowed to go to Edinburgh": so he wrote, so long ago as November, 1896. "I fear I have been overdoing it a little. . . . Mr. Wilson will think me a most unreliable person, for this is the second time I have failed him this autumn." Similar expressions are not unfrequent in the letters of the last two years, and it was the sense of this that led him to decline a third invitation to Northfield, as well as an increasing number of other invitations. Still we all thought he did far too much. Was he right in so persisting? My answer is that very few of us have the right to judge the actions of a man who so walked

with God and worked for God as this. In his own beautiful phrase, God talks much with His own servants in whispers ; they learn much which those at a greater distance cannot overhear. In this case, He seemed to convey to His servant's soul, in silence, but very distinctly, the sense that, do as he might, his life and ministry would not be very long. Hence he was doubly in earnest to redeem the time. The truth is, there was a certain vehemence in his temperament which made it impossible for him to do anything except in that intense, unsparing way. The ease with which he spoke and the rapidity with which he worked, the result of his remarkable natural gifts, hid from us, and perhaps partly hid from himself, the cost at which the whole thing was done. His nature was the sword-blade which is so keen that it must wear through its sheath, and whatever had been George Macgregor's line in life, even had it been of a kind making far less demands on mind and heart, it is very doubtful if he could ever have lived to grow old. In his own calling of the Christian ministry to curtail his engagements would only have meant diminished usefulness, without any assurance that he was prolonging his days. "A man has but one life" ; his business was to make the very most of it. That intense and crowded life of service was his own choice. We may be sure he does not regret it

now; nor, even amidst the keenest sense of loss should we.

When Mary broke the alabaster box, and all the precious contents were poured out at once, the disciples murmured at such waste. No doubt, looking at the matter from their own narrow, prosaic standpoint, they were right. It was an extravagant action, and not an example to be universally followed. But Christ had only praise for it. Mary had *done what she could*, shown her devotion in her own way, and what placed her so immeasurably above those who criticised her was that in what she did self was entirely forgotten, and she was thinking only of her Lord. In George Macgregor we had among us a disciple of Mary's type. He brought his offering with all his heart, and, counting not the cost, he laid all joyfully at the feet of Jesus.

THE LAST YEARS

CHAPTER XV

The Last Years

IN March, 1898, George Macgregor suffered the heaviest blow of his later life. His youngest sister, Bessie, died of meningitis, after a few days' illness. She was a girl of great sweetness of character, strengthened and sanctified by trial, and exerted a remarkable influence over a large class of mill girls among whom she worked. Of recent years, parted as they were by distance, their meetings were more seldom, but the tie between brother and sister was the same as in that memorable year at Ferintosh, before he began the study of divinity, and afterwards, when his letters were full of plans and suggestions for her Bible study. The effect of her death upon him was hardly less deep than that of the deaths of his father and brother, ten years before. These had given a solemn emphasis at the beginning of his ministry, and in this fresh bereavement he seemed to hear a voice of urgency and admonition that remained with him to the close. There was no

vain yielding to grief, and only gentle and blessed thoughts of her who had gone before. On the morning after her death Mr. Macgregor occupied his pulpit as usual, and some received blessing as he urged, upon the younger people especially, the necessity of closing with Christ.

He wrote to a friend:—

11, Hanover Terrace, W.
April 1, 1898.

I write to tell you of the sorrow that has fallen on us. On Saturday my youngest sister, a most beautiful and beloved girl, passed away to the eternal home. She was only a week ill. For her, of course, we cannot grieve, but there is a sore sense of loss. And for those with whom she lived in Glasgow the blow is irreparable. The centre of the home has been taken away.

You will pray for us, and specially for them. Our dear sister was buried on Monday.

Heaven gets more interesting as life goes on, and the cry, "Come, Lord Jesus," becomes more and more the cry of the heart.

1898 was a very full and busy year. It was the year of his second visit to Northfield, and of the special work laid upon him by his own Church in visiting congregations to quicken the missionary interest. Of convention work he had a larger share than, perhaps, in any former year. The year brought other losses, too, besides his dear sister's death. By the death of Mr. John Short, an elder at Notting

Hill, he lost one of his most devoted and sympathetic fellow-workers, and one who was a potent influence in that part of London. At Mr. Short's funeral there was such a company of mourners as Trinity Church had never seen, nor was to see until the day when, amid their sorrow, a great multitude gave thanks to God for the ministry of George Macgregor. Other losses and burdens this young Greatheart bore for his people and himself. Yet there was no appearance of strain. One Monday that May I had a long bicycle ride with him, from Wimbledon to Dorking, thence to Redhill, and back by Croydon. He was a charming companion on such an expedition, and though when alone his pace was twelve miles an hour or more, he was ready to go more slowly and slacken speed at any point for the sake of less strenuous riders. His keen delight in the May beauty of all the Surrey landscape is fresh in my memory, and how we stood for a good while listening to a nightingale in a thicket near Betchworth. We talked of his sister's death, and of many other things; and, as always, one was impressed anew with his immense vitality, and his freedom from the worrying care that keeps so many of God's children in bondage. This year he had hardly any summer holiday. After his return from Northfield, he had only a few days at Braemar, and he preached on both the Sundays when he ought to have rested.

Nevertheless, he began the winter's work with enthusiasm, and worked through most of the season with all his old energy. In February, 1899, he conducted a week's mission in the Barclay Church, Edinburgh. Of that mission Dr. Wilson writes:—

> The last time he was with us I was deeply impressed with the wonderful advance he had made in the knowledge of divine things, and in Christian experience. One could not but look up to him as a teacher specially taught of God, and anticipate a remarkable future for him. And yet he was so humble, and open to any suggestion.

In the Barclay Church Magazine, *At Home and Abroad*, the mission is thus described:—

> The impression deepened night after night. The addresses were direct and home-coming, and each evening the way of salvation was set forth with all clearness and fulness. A number of friends assembled for prayer before the hour of meeting, and again at the close a meeting for prayer was held in the adjoining hall. Many took part in these meetings, and an opportunity for conversation was given to enquirers, and was more or less taken advantage of. As the week advanced, large numbers remained at these after-meetings.
>
> On the afternoons of Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, Mr. Macgregor conducted Bible Readings in the large hall. The hall was filled day after day with attentive and interested audiences, drawn from almost every section of the Christian Church. The expositions of the earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Ephesians were

admirable, full of important teaching, and stimulating in the last degree. The *missionary* afternoon abounded with suggestions of the most practical and stimulating kind, insisting above all things on *prayer* for the advancement of the Lord's work, which would carry everything else with it. There were numerous expressions of appreciation of these afternoon services.

One of the most interesting of all the meetings was an illustrative lecture on "Candles" for the children on the Friday afternoon. The hall was packed with young people, who looked and listened with rapt attention. The illustrations were ingenious and memorable. One young woman, who had come in a state of anxiety, professed to have come into the light, and to have surrendered to Christ during the meeting, and went on her way rejoicing.

For the missioner himself it was a somewhat trying week. Towards the end of it his voice, the "high, keen voice," as a lifelong friend describes it, the fine instrument whose penetrating accents were always heard with ease in the largest church or hall, suddenly failed, and at the very time when he was most anxious to clinch the impression made he found himself suddenly powerless. The friend in whose house he was living writes of this :—

I should like to tell you how much impressed I was by him when he was with us during the mission at the Barclay. He was far from well all the time, but was most patient and uncomplaining, doing his work day by day. On the Saturday his voice went completely, and we had

to send for a doctor. Many men would have fretted and fumed, and have given us a bad time; but he was perfectly calm, and read quietly all day. I remember it was Dr. Brown's book on the Second Coming. All Sunday morning there was great excitement at the Barclay, but it was no use. George could not speak. Most faithfully he used the severe remedies, and did all he possibly could to be able for the evening service, and great was his joy when the doctor gave permission for him to preach in the evening. But all through there was *perfect* submission to God's will.

This mission was but a specimen of the many missions he conducted during these years. But who does not feel that far more impressive than the crowded audiences and their breathless interest is the picture of the worker himself, patient and undisturbed under the keen disappointment, quietly reading on the great subject of the Lord's Second Coming? More and more, all through this later period, wherever he came, men and women were impressed and even awed, less by his sermons and addresses, remarkable as these were, than by his manifest growth in the divine life.

I remember (writes another friend) the time he stayed with us during one Convention, I forget what year, but Andrew Murray spoke at the same time. I did not get to more than two meetings, but I said to a friend that I had got more good from George than if I had gone to them all. I felt that he had *grown* so much since I had seen him before, and he said that Mr. Murray had helped him so

much at Keswick that year, especially in making him realize more the gift God had given to us in prayer. He said we had not half taken in yet all that God meant when He allowed us to go to Him with our requests. He seemed to be so close to Christ Himself that time, that it strengthened one's own faith to see him.

It is a profound remark of Dr. Moody Stuart that evidence of growth in the Christian life is even more impressive than attainment itself. In George Macgregor there was seen much of both, but it was the growth in these later years that most struck those who knew him best.

From the time of his sister's death he seems to have had deeper thoughts than ever on the subject of the discipline of sorrow.

I was much struck (continues the friend last quoted) with many things he said about sorrows and trials when he was staying with us the last time. Of course, it was just after mother went home. . . . He said, whenever a trial came to him, he always looked at it with a kind of reverent curiosity to see what God meant him to learn. That God had many sides to His character, and that each of His children had to see a different side, and show it again to the world; it was in our trials that we got to see our bit of God's character, and if we did not see it and show it again to others, that particular *bit* of God's infinite fulness might never be known.

The Christian Endeavour movement engaged much

of his time and interest in these later years. He liked its definite pledge, binding young people to be "out-and-out" for Christ; he liked its discipline and organisation for service. No form of work among his young people lay more upon his heart than this. He saw in it an apt means for kindling young disciples with missionary fire, and believed it would thus become a great instrument towards the evangelising of the world.

You are not forgotten (he wrote to Miss Usher in China) by our Endeavourers. They think of you as their missionary as much as Mr. Sutherland, and the letter that you sent them was much appreciated. How much more real mission work becomes when there is a living stake in the matter! You do not seem so far away when week by week news of you and your work reaches us.

At the Christian Endeavour Convention at Belfast in May, 1899, he preached the memorable sermon on the word "Rabboni," *My Master.* There was no truth on which in his preaching he dwelt with greater delight than that of Christ's absolute Lordship and Ownership. His motto for the year 1898 was the two words, "I believe: and I belong." The sermon on the bored ear, conveying the same noble message, has been referred to both by Mr. Campbell Morgan and Professor Moule. When the great world's gathering of Endeavourers was held this year in London at the Alexandra Palace, the thanksgiving service included

a special thankful remembrance of George H. C. Macgregor, the choir and the vast audience uniting in singing "Sleep on, beloved! sleep, and taket hy rest."

His own church work, meanwhile, went steadily on, hardly affected by the number and variety of outside claims on strength and time. The missionary interest among his people, to his joy, went on steadily deepening.

A good deal of blessing recently (he writes to Miss Usher in April, 1899). Every week I hear of the Word of God coming home with power to the hearts of different people. It does cheer me so much to find that strangers entering the church for a day have their whole lives altered. Yesterday a young lady called to speak to me, and told me that four years ago she came into Trinity, and she dates her whole religious life from that day. God keeps the matter quite hidden from us for the four years, and then gives us the joy of knowing it. But all the time the blessing was there.

If this is true of our work, how much more will it be true of yours. I think there will be many delightful surprises in Heaven, and one of the most delightful will be for those like you who are doing the work of preaching Christ where He has not been named. Truly our God has put honour on you in allowing you to go forth. May He keep you daily in His love, filled with His Spirit, without Whom you cannot work.

You will have heard of our Missionary Conference. It was a time of marked blessing. The attendance was not

so large as I had hoped, because of the severity of the weather and the abounding sickness. But the meetings were full of spiritual power. They have won for the mission field more than one, and for work at home more than one. It is so delightful to see the work going on. Only yesterday another of our congregation came to me to tell me that she had heard the call of God calling her out to China. I do not know if she will be able to go. But if the call is really of God the way will be made open.

The winter of 1899 began with an enforced family separation, which to a nature like his was peculiarly trying. Mrs. Macgregor had but just recovered from a period of illness when their little boy's state of health made it necessary to send the children to Littlehampton for the winter. It seems strange to us now that during the last months of his life he should have seen so little of his children. The full extent of the sacrifice he had to make was hidden at the time. But the anxiety and the months of necessary separation were received with patience. To a friend abroad he wrote :—

As I daresay you know, in our family life the year has been a very trying one. My dear wife has been far from well all the year, and is only now getting like herself. Then after our return from our summer holiday our little boy took very ill, and has been ordered out of town for the winter. So our household has been broken up, and I am as in old bachelor days. It has been trying, but God has

been, as ever, so gracious, giving special blessing to cheer when the burden pressed heavily. How marvellously good He is, and how one comes to love Him as one comes to know Him better. Truly it *is* eternal life to know Him

God is still speaking to many among us about the mission field, and we are sending two for training to Edinburgh at the beginning of next year.

In November he conducted a united mission at New Barnet. It was his last London mission, and none in which he ever took part was richer in blessing. The people's hearts were wonderfully opened, both to receive blessing and then to tell what Christ had done for them. Never were the preacher's blended earnestness and love more strikingly seen. One might almost have thought some presentiment of the end was urging him to take no denial, but constrain his hearers to enter into the kingdom. As in all his missions, the new quickening received by God's children was not less remarkable than the direct conversions. More than ever Mr. Macgregor showed himself at Barnet to be a teacher as well as an evangelist. A gentleman of wide literary experience was so much struck with the freshness and ability of the addresses delivered day after day, that he urged the missioner to publish them in a volume. The request may yet be fulfilled; but the revision will not come from the author's hand.

Of that mission Mr. Budd wrote in the *Life of Faith* :—

Very many during that mission were struck by the deep humility and profound teaching of this young servant of God. They saw, too, what a "single eye" he had—his desire to be nothing that God might be glorified. He trembled lest anyone should put faith in George Macgregor, instead of resting on his Master and His Word. Seldom have we known any messenger who was more completely hidden. His whole desire was, "Not I, but Christ." How he loved and rejoiced in the preparatory meetings for prayer, and how judiciously he conducted the after-meetings! In these one felt that all the work that was done was of the operation of God the Holy Ghost. No human pressure, no excitement, but prayerful reliance on the Spirit's convicting and satisfying power.

ON TO THE CLOSE

CHAPTER XVI

On to the Close

"Then there came forth a summons for Mr. Standfast. (This Mr. Standfast was he that the rest of the pilgrims found upon his knees in the Enchanted Ground.) For the Post brought it him open in his hands. The contents whereof were, *That he must prepare for a change of life, for his Master was not willing that he should be so far from Him any longer.* At this Mr. Standfast was put into a muse. Nay, said the Messenger, you need not doubt of the truth of my message, for here is a token of the truth thereof, *Thy wheel is broken at the cistern.*"—*The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II.

"THE year opens in gloom," he wrote in his journal on the first day of 1900. "War in South Africa: 150,000 British troops engaged; at home, trouble and sickness." The first few days of the year were, as usual, extremely busy ones, and this year, besides the many gatherings in connection with the Week of Prayer, there were the meetings of the Student Volunteer Missionary Conference, in which he was intensely interested. He was by no means

well. "Bad cold, feeling ill," he notes, though to others he seemed to be working with remarkable vigour. On New Year's Day he presided at a prayer meeting in Exeter Hall, which Mr. Putterill describes as one of the brightest and happiest meetings he ever saw. There was no address. Mr. Macgregor began by saying that this was simply a meeting for waiting upon God, and he would merely name from time to time some of the many topics which they ought to remember before Him. First presenting one or two of these, and inviting short pointed prayers for our Father's help ; then proposing another group of subjects, again a third, and so on, interspersing with singing and a few words of Scripture, he so managed, by means of his tact and brightness and his intense belief in prayer, that in two hours probably a larger number took part than had ever been seen at Exeter Hall.

For a number of weeks he delivered, also at Exeter Hall, a course of special Bible lectures, in continuation of those given in the autumn by the Rev. Hubert Brooke. He had long advocated systematic Bible study of this kind, in order that Bible reading should be intelligent as well as reverent and loving ; and in his own church he had given, on Sunday evenings after service, introductions and analyses of the several books of Scripture. In the recent Bible schools of Professor White and the Rev. G.

Soltau he had taken a warm interest, and he looked forward to a great development of such work. His lectures were given on Thursdays, in the afternoon to a general audience, largely composed of ladies, and in the evening to young men. The lectures were admirable—fresh, lucid, full of information, and of loving delight in God's Word. The attendance, however, was less than might have been expected, though sufficiently accounted for by the circumstances of the season—the inclement weather, the prevalence of sickness, and the anxiety and excitement of the war.

This last journal of his is somewhat pathetic reading. Never had he worked harder in every department of his work than during that late and ungenial spring, and never perhaps with less outward sign of encouragement. Again and again he who was accustomed to eager crowds gave of his best to a mere handful of people. It was a new experience, but he did not let it affect him in the least. If there had once been a certain measure of elation at indications of outward acceptance, that was long past; all that he cared for now was his Master's work, and, to be permitted to serve Him was in itself more than sufficient reward. Physically, the work cost him more than it used to do. More than once he spoke to near friends of warnings which he had received, indicating that he was working perilously near the

utmost limits of his strength. Yet he looked well, the fine calmness of his spirit keeping him up. He even said that during these months he had somewhat gained in weight. To us all the noble "haste" he showed in his King's business was more impressive than ever.

His letters were briefer, and, save necessary notes on business, fewer; but they were full as ever of faith and love.

To a Friend.

February 28, 1900.

Look up. Hope on. Pray without ceasing. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." You are being tempted to discouragement. Resist the devil. Cease to struggle. Trust.

Yours very truly,

GEORGE H. C. MACGREGOR.

To Another.

February 28, 1900.

I hope you are well, and enjoying the favour and blessing of God. I am very well, but over-pressed with work. I have to sing very often, "Not a blast of hurry." It is wonderful how God's peace does keep.

To Another.

March 6, 1900.

I am sending you a "wee bookie" which has been a message of comfort to many, and I want you to pray that God may use it much . . .

I am *very* well, but driven like a slave. I have hardly leisure to eat. Yet I am getting fat.

Yours ever.

G. H. C. M.

Never had his preaching been marked by a greater intensity of appeal to the unsaved than during this spring. It was as if the feeling possessed him which is expressed in the lines :

> I preached as never sure to preach again,
> And as a dying man to dying men.

Sunday after Sunday his one theme was the manifold aspects of the Great Salvation. Christ, our Saviour from Sin, from Care, from Temptation ; His Glory ; the Unchanging Christ ; Christ and our Cross ; Christ and our Perplexities ; such are the topics of successive Sunday evenings. "He always believed," says a friend, "that the specialty of the Christian pulpit was to preach Christ," and in this ministry he persevered with insistence to the last.

In the end of March he went to Aberdeen, to conduct a week's mission in connection with the Young Men's Christian Association. Before the mission began he had two or three days' rest, which he greatly

enjoyed, in the midst of old friends. "Weather beautifully warm and bright," he notes. "Enjoying rest thoroughly."

Sunday, April 1, 1900.—In the morning worshipped in the Free East Church, and heard Todd preach a capital sermon on "He delighteth in mercy." Afternoon spoke to a mission meeting in the Y.M.C.A. on Character. In the evening preached to a great crowd in the Free East on the Mastery of Life, then addressed a meeting in the Y.M.C.A. on To-day.

Day by day the interest at all his meetings deepened, till on the Friday, when the mission closed, he notes "great power and blessing." It was during this week that he paid the visit to Allenvale Cemetery, mentioned in an earlier chapter, and expressed the wish to be buried there. As he and his wife left the cemetery, he said to a friend whom they chanced to meet on the road, "I have just been choosing my last resting-place." There was no sort of gloom or shadow, however, noticeable in his bearing or conversation. Indeed, he was singularly bright and happy. Yet many have felt since as if there was something prophetic about his manner during that last visit. The strange sense of growth and ripening, that Dr. Wilson and others remarked in Edinburgh the year before, was more perceptible still. "So Spirit-led he was," says one, "both in prayer and Preaching, he seemed to divine all that was

passing in his hearers' minds." A friend who had charge of a library in the city saw him several times in the course of the mission. They talked of books, in which he was interested as ever, but he said there were a great many books he used to like which he now found he had no interest in; and he merely glanced at, and laid aside, several volumes by current writers of name. He called upon a number of the old and feeble members of his former congregation. A widow whom he thus visited said she heard he was doing far too much in London. "Ah," he said, "when we look back to it from the other side, how little will everything that we have done appear!"

He returned to London on Saturday, the 7th of April. Next day he preached in his own church a remarkable sermon on Prayer, and in the evening on the Healing of the Dumb Man at Bethsaida—"Ephphatha." The week that followed, after his ten days' absence from home, was a specially busy one. "A terrible morning of letter-writing"; "writing sermons all day"; "very busy"—such are the various days entries. On the Friday, which was Good-Friday, he preached in the morning on Romans iii. 25, on the blessed truth of the Atoning Sacrifice. In the afternoon he addressed a great meeting of the Christian Endeavour Convention in the City Temple. There he spoke on Bible Study, and "showed," wrote Miss Jennie Street in *Christian Endeavour*—

that he had a high opinion of the mental capacity of his audience by giving them an address which would have been quite appropriate to a gathering of theological students . . . The bulk of the audience listened intently, and many young people used notebooks and pencils to good purpose, while the speaker showed that the Bible student's attitude must be *reverent*, *receptive*, *submissive*, and *dependent* on the Holy Spirit; his modes of study must be *direct* (the Bible itself, and not merely books about the Bible), *continuous*, *regular*, *systematic*, and *exegetical*; *i.e.* with a view to discovering its meaning. A useful hint under this division was the counsel to paraphrase familiar Bible verses, to make sure that their meaning has really been grasped. *Methods* of study are many—*literary*, *historical*, *theological*, etc., and all must be used to some extent if the *devotional* method, the most important of all, is to be used to the best advantage; while the *purpose* of all Bible study must be, as Paul wrote to Timothy, equipment for service—"that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

He was not afraid to refer to the burning question of Bible criticism, and, as he had always done, he maintained once more that a reverent and believing criticism is not only legitimate, but renders the greatest service to truth.

On Easter Sunday he preached in the morning the sermon on the Resurrection and the Life, which has since been printed for private circulation. In the afternoon he spoke to the children of his Sunday schools assembled in church, and at night he

preached on John x. 27, 28 and Hebrews vi. 4–6, dwelling upon the joyful assurance of believers, the sheep to whom the Shepherd gives eternal life, and coupling with this the most solemn and tender warning to the unsaved. Next day he travelled to Sunderland, speaking five times in the course of the next two days. On Wednesday evening he was home again, and conducted his week-night service. The text of this, his last sermon, was 2 Peter i. 5, along with the description of the Christian armour in Ephesians. After so much hard work he was still, to all appearance, in the best of health and spirits, and on Thursday was specially bright and energetic. On Friday, however, he was seized with sudden sickness and severe headache. At first nothing more serious than a sharp gastric attack was suspected ; but the increasing fever and the delirium which soon came on indicated something very grave, and on Sunday, April 22, the illness was pronounced to be meningitis. His own physician, Dr. James Kirkland, was in constant attendance from the first ; and when it became necessary to have a consultation, the advice of Dr. Stanley Smith and of Dr. James Taylor, the eminent specialist, was obtained. Two Mildmay nurses assiduously nursed him, and his devoted wife hardly left his bedside during the fortnight's illness.

His death (says Dr. Kirkland, in some notes of Mr. Macgregor's last illness), quiet and uncomplaining, in spite

of the torture he must have suffered, was quite in keeping with his pure, lovely life. Never once was a murmuring or complaining word heard to escape his lips. On the contrary, in the midst of extreme weakness, both of mind and body, his last words on earth were those that he so often spoke with such fervour and love, *Praise God.*

All through his illness, when for brief moments the delirium left him, he thought not of himself, but of others Early in his illness, when I was left alone with him, he beckoned to me, and whispered, with a sweet smile, "Dear doctor, I am so sorry for all the trouble I am giving you and the other dear ones; but I know it is useless, I know I am going home." I shall never forget the lovely smile and the radiant joy that seemed to light up his face as he said it. His thoughts and prayers, as far as we could make them out, seemed all to be for his beloved people and the Jews, and only once did he say to us, when we asked what he was saying (fearing he required something which we might have omitted), "Oh, I am just telling Jehovah about my sickness." I never caught a word about wishing to get better. He seemed to long to go home to be with the Lord he loved so well.

Once, while his wife sat by his bedside, she stooped over him, and he kissed her, and said, "God has a place for me. You will not be forsaken." This was indistinct, and uttered in extreme weakness. As I was standing by his bedside one afternoon, after he had begun to rally from a severe collapse, I said, "Poor dear fellow." He quickly looked up and brightly said, "Oh, I am not quite so sure about that." In Christ he was rich indeed.

The little messages he gave to his dear wife were very sweet and gentle, but oh, so few! He was not able to do

more than utter a few words at a time. Yet he never omitted to thank his devoted nurses, and at times he said things to them quite cheerfully. He always appeared to be quite resigned, and, when he could, he helped us as much as possible. He lived for others, and he died thinking of others.

Very early in his sickness he said to me, "I hope God will spare me to partake of another communion with my congregation." God in His good providence did not permit that. How many of us will drink it new with him in the kingdom of God?

God's own presence seemed very near in the sick-room One could not help feeling that, and the beloved patient felt it too, for he said to me towards the end of his illness, "There must be a stream of prayer ascending for me; I feel it." I do not think he suffered much pain towards the last, but during the earlier part of his illness he suffered keenly, and it was beautiful to see how ungrudgingly and sweetly he bore it. Truly, in his own last written words, he was brave and strong in the Lord. Patience had her perfect work, and he has now received the crown of glory.

The "stream of prayer" of which the sufferer was conscious was indeed an actual fact. The news that George Macgregor lay at the point of death spread with wonderful rapidity, and wherever the grave news came those who loved him, and to whom under God he had been a means of blessing, prayed with much entreaty that, if it were God's will, so precious a life might be spared. Specially was this the case at Barnet and other places, where he had recently

conducted missions, and where those who had so recently seen him in fullest vigour, and rejoicing in the work of the Lord, could scarcely at first credit the news of his danger. In his own congregation there were meetings for special prayer twice a day, and very many Churches of all denominations remembered him before God. Many came long distances to read the daily bulletins at Hanover Terrace and little groups waited outside for fresh tidings till long after midnight. "At the Synod of his Church at Manchester," writes Dr. Stalker, who happened to be present as a deputy, "the cloud of anxiety which rested on the whole assembly, and the strained and hushed attention with which the daily telegrams about his condition were received, bore eloquent testimony to the place of honour and affection he had secured in the hearts of his brethren." Once and again, during that heavy fortnight, there were returns of hope. The patient's vigorous constitution and perfect calmness of spirit were in his favour, and by Tuesday, the 1st of May, the meningitis was overcome. On the previous day Mr. Mathieson saw him for a few moments and offered prayer. A whispered "Amen" at the close was among George Macgregor's last words on earth. Tuesday evening's bulletin, telegraphed to an anxious friend returning homeward from abroad, was, "Slight improvement; doctor hopeful." But before the traveller reached London

all was over. On the Wednesday afternoon there occurred a suffusion of blood on the brain, producing coma, from which there was no rallying, and at half-past eight on the morning of Thursday, the 3rd of May, 1900, he entered into rest. He wanted a month of completing his thirty-sixth year. Young as he was, in the repose of his last sleep he appeared still younger, and it was difficult for those who saw him to realize that such a mass and variety of fruitful service had been accomplished by one so early called away.

On the following Monday, Notting Hill Presbyterian Church was crowded with a great company of mourning friends. Ministers and people of many different Churches were there; those whom he worked with at Keswick, those whom he worked with in the mission cause, and for the conversion of Israel. There, too, was his Northfield comrade, Campbell Morgan, recovered, by the good hand of God, from a dangerous illness. Thus one is taken and another left. The service was conducted by Mr Connell, of Regent Square, Mr. F. B. Meyer, Mr. Johnston Ross, and Pastor Frank H. White. The hymns were, "O God, our help in ages past," "Now the labourer's task is o'er," and "Ten thousand times ten thousand"; songs expressive not of loss and sorrow only, but of hope and triumph too. In Mr. Meyer's address, also, there was a clear note of

thanksgiving and satisfaction for the life so full of service and consecration, now crowned with victory and rest. Next day a similar scene was witnessed in the Free East Church, Aberdeen, and the same strains of faith and thanksgiving heard; and then they laid to rest in Allenvale Cemetery all that was mortal of George Macgregor, to wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On Sunday, the 13th May, Mr. Macgregor's pulpit at Notting Hill was occupied in the morning by the present writer, and in the evening by Mr. Johnston Ross. Looking back over his friend's religious life, especially from the point when, in 1883, it "burst forth in a sudden blaze of splendour and intensity of devotion," Mr. Ross said :—

I have no hesitation in saying that the outstanding note of my friend's religious life was from the very beginning his frank acceptance of the position of *debtorship* to Jesus Christ. He placed his life absolutely in the hands of his Lord. For leadership, alike in the small details of life and in the shaping purposes of his career, he gave himself completely over into the Saviour's hands.

I cannot believe that my friend's life, which from the first was so entirely surrendered, and which was yet essentially an ambitious life—ambitious for self-fulfilment, and he resolved to have that self-fulfilment only in and through Jesus Christ—I cannot believe that the satisfaction and fulfilment have been denied to a life that strained after, that yearned towards, that from the beginning leaned absolutely

upon Jesus Christ. As I go back to the days when he and I knelt together, as we sought to give ourselves to Jesus and consecrate our lives to Him, and as the echo of that high, keen voice, with its peculiar urgency in prayer comes back to me now, I think of my friend straining towards Jesus; and I cannot believe that he is anywhere to-day but where John lay, breast to breast with the Lamb of God.

Thus we have followed our brother's life to its close. But ought we not rather to say, to the beginning? For the perfect life which he yearned for, unclouded light and holiness, and unbroken fellowship with God, is the life he has now entered upon in the presence of the King.

HIS WORKS DO FOLLOW HIM

CHAPTER XVII

His Works do Follow Him

"His life was in accord with his preaching, and in that preaching there was a note which sounded with special distinctness and emphasis, the call to a life of holiness."—*Mr. James E. Mathieson.*

DEEP and widespread was the sense of loss at the news that George Macgregor had gone home. From all sections of the Christian Church, and nearly all parts of the world, came tributes of sympathy and testimonies of indebtedness. Peculiarly touching were those which came from distant mission fields, where, even amid threatening danger, they remembered and mourned one so devoted to the evangelization of the world. Of the numberless letters of sympathy received, two may be given as of somewhat special interest. The first is from Mrs. Moody, the second from the venerable chairman at Keswick.

EAST NORTHFIELD, MASS.,
May 17, 1900.

MY DEAR MRS. MACGREGOR,

I have just heard to-day of your sad loss and your dear

husband's gain. How my heart aches for you! I know all about it—the aching void, the loneliness, and the change it makes when we feel part of our life has gone from us. I know, too, that the Lord can help, and He loves us all the time. I pray that He may comfort you. He can do it as no earthly friend can, and to you and the dear children may He be a very present help.

There are many in Northfield who will think of you in your sorrow, and many will grieve that they shall hear your husband's voice here no more. I love to think that the separation may not be long, but that Christ may come with our dear ones *soon*.

Though I have not met you, I feel that you will let me sympathize with you, and so send you my tender love and sympathy.

Very sincerely yours,
EMMA C. MOODY.

BROUGHTON GRANGE, COCKERMOUTH,
May 5, 1900.

MY DEAR MRS. MACGREGOR,

How shall I dare to take, in even the smallest measure, the office of the Abiding Comforter, who is with you and yours in this deep trouble He has been pleased in His infinite wisdom and love to permit? His words are, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." So in the hands of Him who "doeth all things well" we must leave it, seeking strength to say, "Thy will be done."

My dear bereaved friend and sister, take all the loving sympathy which fills my heart, from one who was permitted by the dear one gone home to call him brother.

How we all shall miss him, and his clear and forcible words, none can tell.

Excuse more, as I am but feeble; yet my love is strong. May you know the Lord to sustain you—"He is faithful."

Your sympathizing friend, with much love,

ROBERT WILSON.

Try to live *one* day at a time, and *do not look forward. His* God is *your* God for ever, and will guide. May you be able to rejoice in the glory into which he has entered, and which he now shares with his Lord.

A gentleman well known both in England and Scotland wrote:—

I owe him much. It was observing a lovely trait in his character that gave my daughter her first impression of the reality of Keswick teaching, and changed her life. We venerate his memory. . . . At Keswick he spent a long night—far into the small hours—in deep and holy conversation with our guests—a night some of them will never forget.

There has never (says his revered teacher, Professor Laidlaw) been any death among my former pupils that I have mourned so much as this. What was so attractive to me from the beginning of his student days was the directness and simplicity of his attention to the main end of the Christian ministry, the promotion of the interests of the kingdom of God. He was a diligent and devoted student, but even study was secondary, a means to an end; the primary thing was that God's work should be done. When I visited him afterwards, as a minister in Aberdeen, his talk and manner in the house, no less than his preaching, carried on exactly what had been conceived of him at

college, and was entirely occupied with the interests of the spiritual life.

After he went to London I saw less of him, but we met frequently at Keswick, and he visited us on Keswick work in Edinburgh. It always seemed to me that that work was with him simply a higher and intenser form of what had been from student days his real life. No doubt it seemed to him to come as a crisis, and was his entrance upon a more liberated exercise of spiritual ministry. But to us looking on, it seemed the most natural and expected result of all that had gone before.

His was a most memorable character and personality. As a student he was eager and ready for his work; as a minister he was entirely devoted to spiritual results, rejoicing in these, praying and labouring for them; as a man, affectionate, helpful, and enkindling. To be with him was to move in a high region of religious fellowship and refreshment.

It would be easy to multiply similar testimonies, so precious and helpful to the children of God were the life and ministry now ended here. Yet who shall say that the ministry is ended? He, being dead, yet speaketh, and must speak to some for many days, alike by his writings and his example. Few lives that I have known have a more impressive message for his brother ministers: this, in the first place, as we have already seen, through his extraordinary singleness of purpose and the intensity with which he redeemed the time. To some of us his

very portrait speaks, as Henry Martyn's did to Charles Simeon.

"There!" said Mr. Simeon, looking up with affectionate earnestness at Mr. Martyn's picture, as it hung over his fireplace—"there! see that blessed man. What an expression of countenance! No one looks at me as he does; he never takes his eyes off me, and seems always to be saying, 'Be serious: be in earnest: don't trifle—don't trifle.'" Then, smiling at the picture, and gently bowing, he added, "And I won't trifle—I won't trifle."

But especially George Macgregor's life speaks by its unwearied quest for holiness. That was the master-passion of his life. When a student, he was noted, as we have just seen, for putting spiritual things always first. He knew that college life, even for a student of divinity, is a critical time. "He often expressed his conviction," says Mr. Kelman, "that theological study must be either the establishing or the spoiling of a man, and he enrolled himself in New College in a spirit of anxious determination that by God's grace he would not let his ardour cool." In after years there was less of conscious effort, but that was only because Christ had even more become his life. That the man was perfect we do not claim. Weaknesses and imperfections there were, as with his brethren; some of them lay upon the surface. But few have exercised in most things a

more watchful self-discipline, and few have kept more steadily in view, not as a far-off hope for the other life, but as a present experience through faith, the fulness of the Spirit and union with God.

What he did also in the cause of missions will not be forgotten. Few have done more, wherever his influence extended, to put this great duty of the Church of Christ on its proper basis. Christ for the world, and the world for Christ: such was his aim, and the means towards its accomplishment was that every follower of Christ should reckon himself a missionary, responsible in his own degree for the winning of the world for his Lord. To burn-in the sense of this responsibility on the general Christian conscience was his earnest desire. He longed to see far more volunteers go forth, as he himself would fain have gone; he longed for a far greater measure of liberality; but, above all, he insisted on the need of *prayer*. The little booklet, *The Supreme Need in Mission Work*, already spoken of, is among his best legacies to the Church of Christ.

So the worker is gone, but the work continues, in which he and we alike are labourers with God. Heavy, indeed, is the sense of loss, for a soul more bright, courageous, and brotherly—above all, more devoted to Christ—we shall hardly look to find. But

his memory and example remain; and even as we thankfully dwell on the remembrance of this good gift lent to us for a season, our thoughts are lifted up in praise and adoration to the Eternal Giver.

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